READINGS

(Essays on Kashmiri Literature)

MAJROOH RASHID

...What has particularly impressed me about him
(Majrooh Rashid) is his scholarly interest in the study of advanced critical works bearing on some significant areas of English Literature. With this acquisition he is well-equipped to evaluate the materials in Kashmiri.

—Prof. A.N. Dhar

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(ESSAYS ON KASHMIRI LITERATURE)

MAJROOH RASHID

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For

My brother
Abdus Salam Malik
And
My Bhabi
Izat-un-Nisa

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PREFACE

The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palm's are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

{ Wordsworth: Intimations Ode}

PREFACE

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FOREWORD

It is always embarrassing to write a foreword to a book whose author happens to be related to you by blood. The sense of embarrassment turns to one of near-speechlessness when you are yourself mentioned in the work a couple of times in quite respectful terms. Yet there are obligations which you cannot escape. I am glad that in spite of inhibiting constraints, words stand by me as I sit down to express myself about the book.

The book consists of some highly relevant studies of a few aspects of Kashmiri literature, prominent currents that have gone to shape its contours, and some of the outstanding contributors to it, especially in its latest phase. All these critical readings reveal the author's original approach to literary issues and his sensitive perception of the subtleties of literary expression— qualities that are always rare to come by. His fair acquaintance with European critical trends, particularly those which are related to English literature, adds substance to the use of these studies.

The value of a collection of readings like the present one will be obvious to all those who know Kashmiri literature and are conversant with the lineaments of its present state of growth. What we require at the moment, among other things, is vigorous and comprehensive work of translation from the Kashmiri into other languages and vice versa, and the development of a definitive literary terminology. Collections of studies in English about various facets of our literature obviously fall into place in this broad area of scholarly work.

Two cardinal ideas seem to me to underlie these essays. The first of them is the author's belief that the Kashmiri genius is distinguished by its strong and uncompromising commitment to the life of the spirit and a relative disregard of the materialistic side of life. This, no doubt, determined the directions of the individual and collective life of Kashmir for long centuries but a subtle change seems to have come about in this attitude as a result of the onslaught of modern materialistic and mechanical civilization. In several contexts, particularly in discussions about modern Kashmiri literature, the author himself takes note of the unmistakable symptoms of this change.

The second is that literature helps understand life better and adds to its value and meaningfulness in a significant way. This is the sanest approach to literature and we need to reconfirm our faith in it at a time when word-play for the sake of word-play is taking over the literary-critical scene— a return of the art for art's sake in a much more morbid form, a superficiality that mocks at all kinds of profundity and sense. This is Postmodernism in art. For an Oriental student of literature— a Kashmiri for instance— it is not easy to come to terms with this phenomenon. We cannot make sense of what has not yet befallen us, not to speak of articulating it. For us a Postmodern stance may be a pose but can hardly be a reality . The author's essay ' Postmodernism in Kashmiri Poetry' immediately throws up this complex question. If, as the author aptly quotes David Harvey, " Post modernism is mimetic of social, economic, and political practices in the societies in which it appears", then it does not belong to us for the present; what will happen in future is hard to foresee. If history takes a turn and the Western domination ends, who knows what will be the shape of things to come. Meaning may replace meaninglessness and evolution may not necessarily imply the loss of value and purpose. For the time being " the ceremony of innocence is drowned" in the West and moribund in the East .

The success of a book of literary criticism lies in its ability to make us think. From this point of view, *Readings* is a welcome addition to our critical repertoire. I hope the book proves to be an important milestone in the career of Dr. Majrooh Rashid, a budding and growing Kashmiri poet and critic whose work has already won him a deservedly wide acclaim.

Naseem Bagh, Srinagar
4 April, 2007

G.R.Malik

FREE WILL VERSUS DESTINY IN KASHMIRI POETRY

It is an established fact that Kashmiri poetry, from the medieval times to the beginning of the twentieth century, was 'mystic', 'divine' or ‘spiritual’, concerned mainly with the spiritual aspects of man and his relation with God. It was what Ransom in *Poetry: A Note an Ontology* called 'platonic poetry' full of abstract ideas, concepts and theories, and therefore devoid of any concreteness. This poetry gave a secondary place to the mundane, materialistic and earthly aspects of nature and man. The predominant features of this poetry are: a) it hardly generates a positive outlook on life; b) condemns the earthly pleasures and; c) propagates shunning away from worldly attractions, allurements and fascinations .

> What made you sink deep in the sea
> Of unreal charms of the world ?
> What made you demolish the embankment
> And caused the dense darkness of your soul ?
> (Lal Ded).
>
> My flying horse sank in the quagmire
> And rendered me helpless, weeping and wailing
> On the shores of the swamp.
> What shall I do with the iron wedge of self
> The blind lost his way, oh self! Why don't you understand?
> (Shaikhul Aalam)
> I saw the mountains and hillocks engulfed in fire
> And the waters looked black;

The lush green mesh enticed me
And trapped me there and then.
(Shams Faqir).

Notwithstanding the strong poetic sentiment projected through concrete imagery, the poetry of Lal Ded, Shaikhul Aalam and other prominent poets of the 19th century is escapist in nature and has hardly any yearning for worldly fascinations and charms. No doubt the age-old socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions and traditions encouraged this type of poetic sensibility but its unidimensional approach still remains one of its main limitations. Kashmiri people were socially, economically and politically deprived of their rights and were subjected to various types of injustices. Sir Walter Lawrence describes their plight in these words:

> It placed them at the mercy of short-lived governers ignorant of their language and customs, who worked their will on the Kashmiris regardless of the policy of the courts of Delhi, Kabul and Lahore, and looked upon Kashmir in the same light as that in which the Roman proconsuls regarded Africa.

One can very safely say that the fate of the Kashmiris during this period was mostly dependent upon the impulses and willfulness of the foreign rulers which in turn helped shape their collective psyche - a psyche which is more inclined to the metaphysical abstractions and least interested in the physical authenticity of things. No doubt the Kashmiri poets faced the colourful drama of life but circumstances never allowed them to live it. They rather turned their faces from the hues of outer reality and took refuge in the insipid inwardness.

I lit the candle with the blood of my jagular vein
And the light illuminated my darkness
I was surprised to see the rubies therein
(Wahab Khar)

In the court of Lord Indira,
The fairies are singing and dancing,
And the passion of Mansoor is roaring,
It just happened that I caught the sight and sound,
And I went mad
(Ahmad Batwari).
Be at one with the Real,
Search and research within your self,
This life is a transitory phase,
Tomorrow you have to be at one with Him
(Shams Faqir)
Listen, the river of Eternity is tumultuous,
Being uncouth one can not go across
You must take your guide along
(Shams Faqir)
My song has a different connotation,
It sings of the seven hues,
Numberless people came and went
Only the one is there from the beginning
(Samad Mir).

Medieval Kashmiri poets, therefore, sang of celestial beauty and relatively ignored the black-eyed damsels around them. One is reminded of the English romantic ethos, more particularly the revolutionary ideas of Blake, Wordsworth and Shelley which shook off the outward show of things and ignored the materialistic desires that impede the spirit. All of them cared for the splendour of human love and the ecstatic delight of nature (sun, sky, stars, clouds and sea) but only so far as it carried them to their inmost spiritual passions. Their approach, so far as the theme is concerned, bears a resemblance to the medieval Kashmiri mystic poetic tradition. Blake's 'Eden' and 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you', Wordsworth's Lucy Gray and Ruth like metaphors wherein 'Man and Nature' touch and blend, and

Shelley's fire of love and its warmth in moulding human destiny are not alien to the student of the medieval Kashmiri poetry. Under the circumstances, it was impossible, or even unimaginable for Kashmiri poets to deal with issues related to 'Humanism' or 'a man-centered universe'. They, as firm believers in God, treated man as a mere vicegerent of Him, whose only aim was to attain nearness to Him, rather than be like Marlowe's heroes or Nietzsche's superman. Even when they talked of man's self or ego or what Iqbal later termed as Khudi that man in relation to God, not man as capable of becoming God became important. Both Lal Ded and Shaikhul Aalam along with major Sufi Poets believed that man is responsible, accountable and above all capable of building his own image.

For him candy is poison and poison is candy
One who puts in his best in the struggle;
And one who has strong will power and endurance
Will reach his destination
(Lal Ded).

One who ploughs the field,
Is sure to reap the harvest
(Shaikhul Aalam)

For a moment I desired
And heard the jingling song
Playing in my bosom
(Shams Faqir).

A reader of poetry would hardly come across such poems as reflecting on the helplessness of man, his tragic predicament and suffering - the universal human feelings expressed in great classics of world literature. Though one comes across such verses of the above mentioned poets as discussing the 'will of God' and 'free will of man', these occasional verses are not in tune with their overall philosophy which envisages that man is capable of moulding his fate and destiny:

> O man, how could you twine a chain of sand,
> This cannot make your boat float
> What God has written in your Karma Line
> None but he can alter it
> (Lal Ded).
>
> See and observe the knowledgeable and skilful people
> Serve at the doors of fortunate ones
> (Shaikh al-Aalam).

Whether man is free or not, is a seminal question that has attracted the minds of great artists and philosophers since the antiquity, Unlike Greek mythology, the composite Kashmiri Philosophy (Shivite and Islamic) does not conceive of any fate weaving a web of destiny from which nobody upon earth can save himself. The Kashmiri poets, therefore, believed that man can influence his destiny through hard work, awareness and knowledge and can live a purposeful life if he wishes so. They conceive that soul is free but once trapped in the mesh of body loses its freedom. Rehman Dar and Swacha Kraal are amongst the most distinguished Sufi poets of the 19th century. In the poems *Shash Rang* (Six hues) and *Taqdir Aam No Wane* (I could not comprehened Destiny) and *Depiomus te Dupnum* (Dialogue between Man and God) written by these major Sufi poets of Kashmiri the reader comes across some forceful deterministic feelings. In the beginning and the middle of the first poem the persona speaks of helplessness but at the end he overcomes this feeling and touches the summit of human exaltation. However, in the latter two poems the persona does not seem to be as romantic as that of the first poem and in spite of his tremendous efforts he does not get over the pain caused by his predicament of helplessness and the feeling of not being free to comprehend his fate and destiny, though he has full faith in God and His divine creation.

> I have full command over the cycle of life
> And I feel united with Him at every point of time
> (Six hues)
> In this transitory world I lost my value,
> I hạd to walk with my eyes,
> It proved very difficult to walk on the ocean of times,
> My life is coming to an end now
> And my eagle-like wings are afflicted.
> I lost my life in moulding my destiny
> But I could never comprehend it
> (I could not comprehend Destiny).
> Man: "Share with me the secret of divine creation.
> God: Those whom I have shared with lost their wits"
> ("Dialogue between Man and God").

However, in the twentieth century which 'liberated' man from various traditional approaches and outlooks, Kashmiri poetry outgrew its traditional style and came closer to the terrestrial features of life and the newly developed poetic idioms and predilections with all their creative force. This emphasized significane of human experience rather than the so-called intuition. Mehjoor and Azad, who are known as the trendsetters of modern Kashmiri poetry liberated Kashmiri poetry from traditional psychological nuances and made it a tool of expression of their warm feelings. Mehjoor, who was largely a conformist, did introduce new themes like earthly love and other secular subjects in his poems. Though the main persona of his poems is the same age-old love-sick woman, yet she has a fresh idiom at command in his poems. Professor Rehman Rahi has rightly pointed out that *Yemberzul* (Jasmine) is an exceptional poem and has nothing in common with Mehjoor's other poems as the overall philosophy of his poetry is not in accord with this poem". *Jasmine* symbolizes man's tragic plight, agonies of helplessness and subjugation. Essentially an allegory, the poem is an artistic miracle achieved through the objective correlative of "jasmine". The poem is regarded as one of the great Kashmiri poems.

Me, Jasmine and He made me to suffer
I was taken aback to see the impasse I have been brought to
(Jasmine)

Azad, as compared to Mehjoor, composed different type of poems. His poems are full of new zeal and fervour; poems like "The River", 'The Waterfall' and "The Stars" are considered among the greatest poems of not only Azad himself but of all Kashmiri poetry. In these poems Azad sings of human values like Humanism and international brotherhood. Azad had a firm faith in man and believed that man is essentially the crown of the creation and should prove himself worthy of the same, which he is certainly capable of.

O Man, you were the light and have become an inferno ;
You have brought a bad name to the whole human Fraternity
(The Stars)

Life is nothing but the gospel
Of change and revolution.
I feel the pleasure in confronting with
The hardships and difficulties of life
(The River).

After Azad, a galaxy of poets, capable of imaginative warmth and creative potential, made this newly established poetic tradition more stable. Poets like Rehman Rahi, Nadim, Kamil and Firaq helped Kashmiri poetry reveal the warmth of such feelings, a thing which had remained alien for several hundred years. Initially most of these poets believed in idealism but as they outgrew their idealistic limits they portrayed a different picture of man and his predicament. At the end of the day they saw man surrounded by hostile circumstances, very difficult to escape from. The persona of such poems is a wronged buffoon as compared to the persona of their earlier poems wherein he emerged as a tragic hero. "The wronged buffoon" is surprisingly the title of a classic poem of the twentieth century.

In this world
Every human
Lal, Habba Khatoon and Yazeed
Is dancing on the slippery sand
And in the process
Looks like a buffoon
Even being wronged
(The Wronged Buffoon).

The poems of younger contemporaries of Rehman Rahi like Shafi Shauq and Rafiq Raz share this kind of sensibility with him but with different approaches and treatments. Shouq is modern in outlook while Raz is deeply rooted in his oriental tradition which gives meaning both to his being and art. The persona of Shauq's poems resembl the protagonist of *Waiting for Godot*. His poetic persona does not shed tears over his metaphysical plight, he rather laughs at it with a tragic note:

The fresh step and the new moment
Is nothing but a whirlpool of uncertainty
A place for the feet to stand upon!
And a hope to live
And the rest:
Hidden calm nests
Of dangers and misfortunes (A poem)

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SELF-INTROSPECTION IN KASHMIRI POETRY

Right from Lala Ded down to modern times, self introspection has been a predominant theme of Kashmiri poetry. Now the question is: what is this element of self-introspection all about? Analyzing the subject, one must look into the causes which have made Kashmiris introverted. Two causes suggest themselves. One, Kashmiris have always been subjected to natural calamities and political exploitation over the past several hundred years, resulting in a predilection for a highly spiritual life. Two, Kashmiris have always preferred spirituality to materialism. Historians can well answer why this is so. Be that as it may the Kashmiri genius is an entity which acquired and imbibed spiritual inspiration from different directions and various schools of thought over the years and assimilated it with its genius. During the course of history, Kashmiris have converted from one religion to another, and changed their life-styles, but one thing they have not compromised with is that they have all along been fascinated by spiritual heights of life rather than the pleasures of earthly life. Right from the Hindu period down to the present day they have been drawn to the aesthetic of self-introspection.

There is a common notion in literary criticism that although a piece of art is an outcome of an individual creativity yet therein could be felt the echo of the collective psyche of the race which its creator belongs to. A poet enriches the values, culture and sensibility which he himself is a part of and it is not possible for him to transcend it for it is this particular culture and sensibility which provides him the subject matter for his poetry. If he does not comprehend his tradition, he will cease to be a creative artist. While expressing himself through the collective experiences of his race, he upholds the rich tradition and at times rebels against those who do not respect the basic human aspirations.

Kashmiri poets have also taken to the same path. They have loved to sing of the spiritual aspect of human life and relatively ignored its material aspect. They believe in a life wherein material wealth proves of no avail and difference of faith and community becomes irrelevant and wherein humanity is the source of determining values and justice. However, it should be borne in mind that Kashmiri poets have ignored even those aspects of life also which generate a positive outlook on life. They have loved and undoubtedly loved but the Lord only. There are, of course poets like Rasool Mir, Mehjoor and others who lived colourful lives and portrayed their beloveds as human beings of flesh and blood. But the fact remains that the hang-over of the past several hundred years' tradition has not allowed even Rasool Mir, Mehjoor and Kamil to be at rest and their collective psyche has compelled them to abide by the great tradition : the essence of Kashmiri Shaivism, Reshut and Islamic mysticism. That is why we are not surprised when a mystic verse occurs all of a sudden in their romantic poems. It goes without saying that even these poets have not been able to shake off this tradition. The excessive inclination of Kashmiris to the other-worldliness and their distrust of the physical coupled with their introspection made some people believe that Habba Khatoon was not married to Yusuf Shah and that she was not his queen. That is why they still believe that their relationship was spiritual rather than physical.

Modern Kashmiri poets have also projected this tendency of self-introspection in their poetry, though in a different way. Their interest lies in the depiction of inner-most experiences; no doubt, there are reasons responsible for this in the outer reality around them, but the great tradition of self-introspection is also at work, however, unconsciously.

While going through the verses of Lala Ded, Sheikhul Aalam, the poems of Shams Faqir, Rehman Dar, Swacha Kral and others we can notice that although their works are essentially didactic, yet one can spot such poems as are remarkable for their tremendous poetic beauty. The number of poems wherein artistic miracles are achieved is small according to academic critics whose appreciation of poetry is rooted in alien cultures. Such poems demand a fresh critical approach, for it is essentially a different kind of poetry.

The main emphasis of Kashmiri poets has been on the discovery and recognition of one's self and on unveiling the hidden recesses of the soul. For them the real strength of the soul lies in illumination and enlightenment. Their main preoccupation has been to impart moral and spiritual education to human beings so that they cultivate a spiritual thinking which according to them is the essence of human life. They have preferred the human soul to the human mind for they believe that the human mind is not capable of comprehending the ultimate reality. Nevertheless, a human being is capable of recognizing his self only when he is determined to do so. The recognition of the self leads him to perceive and comprehend the ultimate reality. They hold that faith and community do not count. In fact one should cross the barriers of faith and community. If one's faith does not allow and help him to see whether or not justice is done to one and all then it is irrelevant; he then ceases to be human. To achieve the goal of self-recognition, he should prepare himself for an inward journey and for finding in his own heart the light which illuminates the dark recesses of his being and enlightens the world around him. Here I will quote only two poems wherein the element of introspection is evident. The first one is a *Vakh* by Lala Ded and it reads:

Lord Siva is watching out,
Treat Hindus and Muslims as one
If you have the prowess, know your self
Therein lies the knowledge of God.

Now here is a poem by Momin Saheb that reads:

BE AT ONE WITH HIM

Be at one with Him
And get over your sense of alienation from Him
Peer inwards to get at your core.
Your heart is a burning candle,
Lights the dark night of your soul.
Leave this mundane world behind,
And urge your horse on.
The oneness of things is all too evident.
All are heading to the same destination
And do not let your mind wander
Else you will be at a loss
What you see around
Is but your own shadow.
Purge your heart of all ill-will
Cling to Him by bridging the gulf.
And let your heart blossom in love
Momin your friend, has come
With a clear bosom.

Kashmiri mystic poets have vehemently projected this theme and have constantly inspired their readers/ listeners to turn their hearts into mirrors by wiping away their sins and ill deeds for this would help them get over their inhibitions and malice. To them this is the only way to attain the status of an ideal human being. Thereafter he will find himself neither in a pet nor can he nurse any grievance against others. He will behold his Love in everything. To him all the names of God are different names for the same reality. He will make no distinction between various places of worship for he knows that the spirit dwelling there is one and the same. Mystic experiences are extraordinary in nature. A common man like me cannot readily spot the Lord for He is not visible to the physical eye. But the people, who have the power to introspect, can recognize themselves and their Lord. The Lord clears all barriers for them and makes them able to have a full view of their inner selves and the Lord.

It is not Kashmiri poetry alone wherein much emphasis has been laid on the subject under discussion. There is a good number of legends and myths which deal with this theme in one way or the other. For example take the myth of *Aka-Nandunn*. The contents of the legend can lend themselves to different interpretations. The myth has been versified by five Kashmiri mystic poets. It has come down to us from the Hindu period and still holds fascination for common masses. The poets have treated the tale in different ways but the only thing, which according to Prof. Hajini, has been preserved by one and all is the element of introspection.

The same is the case with *Heemal _ Nagi Rai* We know the legend. But the point I wish to make is that the basic theme of the legend is the importance of spiritual life. When the *mathnavi* of *Heemal Nagi Rai* written by Wali-Ullah Matoo comes to an end, the poet refers to a group of people who arrive at the place on the eve of the death of Heemal and Nagi Rai . They say:

"Our Nagi Rai was a Muslim
he definitely belongs to us"!

Now the question is: who were these people and where did they come from? According the poet they had come from Madina.

But when the *mathnavi* written by Pandit Siv Ram comes to an end, he depicts an incident which took place after the death of Heemal and Nagi Rai:
He says:

> "One day an ascetic was mourning their death under the shade of a tree and suddenly Shankara and Parvati came over in the form of birds. They perched on the branches of the tree. Parvati asked Shankara if there was any way out for their rebirth. Shankara replied in the affirmation, saying that this was possible only if their ashes were thrown into a certain spring. The ascetic sitting under the shade of the tree did the same."

No doubt in both the *mathnavis* the end has been dealt with differently, the similarity of both lies in their emphasis on the spiritual. Wali-Ullah Matoo does so by bringing a group of people from Madina, the most sacred place for Muslims after Mecca while Pandit Shiv Ram does so by making Shankara give Heemal and Nagi Rai new life.

Be it the *Gulrez* of Maqbool Shah Kralwari, the *Bakawali* of Lasa Khan Fida or any other narrative poem like the ones mentioned above, each poem at its surface level seems to be a love poem but is essentially a journey from an outer world towards the inner world.

Last but not the least, Kashmiri masses have all along been in love with the mystic utterances and have enjoyed them. They believe that poets are the most pious people and Kashmiri poets have been like that in the past. They also believe that Sufi poets had divine inspiration while the poets of the present day compose their poems with the help of acquired knowledge. That is why we have a different word for the poet in Kashmiri i.e. *gwanimath*, i.e., a man/woman of extraordinary attributes. We all know that tombs have been raised on the graves of Sufi poets and people go there to pay homage to them.

I personally believe that even the grave of Mehjoor would have become a place of pilgrimage had he been buried at Mitrigam, his native village. The deplorable condition in which Mehjoor's grave at Athwajan lies shows our indifference to our cultural heritage.

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1. Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din, "Lok Adab Hamari Mushtarkah Miras'" in *Shirazah: Saqafat* number, 1996. p. 202.
2. Ibid.

DHAVANI IN LALA'S POETRY

At the outset I would like to confess that I feel handicapped while appreciating Kashmiri poetry as I do not know Persian nor do I have any knowledge of Sanskrit without which no student of Kashmiri literature can genuinely appreciate and evaluate Kashmiri poetry. As is known to everybody, Kashmir represents a cultural entity and a synthesis of various religious hues which imbibed influences mainly from Islamic and Hindu traditions, which has been fascinating for outsiders from antiquity. Their fascination for Kashmir has in its turn helped them as it has instigated them to make brilliant and exhaustive studies in the field of Kashmir studies and brought to light the distinctive and salient characteristics of Kashmir's cultural legacy and literary theory.

Lala Ded has been an interesting subject for western scholars like Grierson, Temple, Stein and others. They have tried to appreciate and analyze her philosophical musings as well as her poetic potentialities but their readings of Lal Ded cannot be taken as genuine and authentic readings as they could never appreciate the niceties of Lala's vernacular nor was it perhaps their field. The genuine and authentic studies in Lala's poetry began in the twentieth century with Abdul Ahad Azad's *Kashmiri Zubaan Aur Shayiri* a three- volume book in Udru. After Azad, a galaxy of profound Kashmiri scholars like Prof. J.L.Kaul, Prof. Rehman Rahi, Mohammad Yousuf Teng, Prof. Shafi Shauq and others started learned critical discussions in their writings on Lala's verses. Though these scholars have dispassionately analyzed her poetry even then their orientation as critics seems mostly Persio-Arabic and western as they have time and again referred to western as well as Persio-Arabic literary theory. While going through the historic treatises of Azad, *Kashmiri Zubaan Aur Shayiri* and Prof. J.K.Kaul's *Studies in Kashmiri* one is convinced that they as well as their successors have been unconsciously conscious of the poetic traditions of Lala and the critical theory in the background. But no systematic study or critical examination of Lala's poetry in this direction has been taken up till date. True it is that Azad, Rahi, Teng and Shauq have not been students of Sanskrit but Prof. Kaul as I have been given to understand knew Sanskrit as well as Persian. It looks strange that even Prof. Kaul has not taken into account the theories which had been in vogue before Lal Ded emerged on the literary arena of Kashmir. Prof. Rehman Rahi has recognized the contribution of great literary aesthetician and critic Ananda Vardhan and has dedicated a poem to him. Prof. G.R.Malik, Prof. Shafi Shauq and Prof. Gulshan Majeed have written stray essays on the oriental aesthetics and criticism.

In this brief paper my main aim and objective are to draw the attention of Kashmiri Sanskrit scholars whose field of specialization is literary criticism and literary theory to make an attempt of lending Lala's poetry to particular Kashmiri critical thought that is popularly known as "DHVANI". As already confessed at the very outset I do not have any direct knowledge of Sanskrit language and literature and therefore I feel embarrassed, but even then my love for Lala's poetry, its intellectual background and the theories which Lala consciously or unconsciously benefited from cannot be in question. Many books on Sanskrit poetics and aesthetics are available in English and a student of Kashmiri literature who does not know anything about Sanskrit literature and criticism gets enlightened with the literary and critical insight of these books.

The concept of *Dhvani* is a turning point in the critical theory of Sanskrit poetics as it represents the loftiest kind of poetic composition which re-creates a unique experience in the mind of its reader. The propounder of the theory *Dhvani* Ananda Vardhan was a contemporary of king Avantivarman and was associated with his court. According to his *Dhvani* theory it was for the first time in the history of Sanskrit criticism that criticism shifted its focus from external ornamentation of poetry to the inner beauty of the literary artifact expressed in a symbolic form. Such kind of a critical point of view though known to Ananda Vardhana's predecessors too was given a solid theoretical foundation and firm footing by Ananda Vardhana. Ananda Vardhana, the exponent of the theory, discussed the whole gamut of poetic process and its nitty-gritty in his famous book *Dhavanyaloka*. According to him he drew inspiration from the science of language while formulating and establishing the theory and maintained that *Dhvani* is formulated "on the analogy of doctrine of *Sphota* enunciated in the science of language" [1]. His principal commentator Abhinav Gupta made comprehensive discussions on this literary term *Dhvani* in his *Lochna* and explained its multidimensional facets and tried to authenticate its critical utility with the science of language which according to him employs the same term to signify various issues.

According to great Sanskrit grammarian Bhartrhari, there are "two entities in the significant speech: the sound that is comprehended by the auditory organ and the sound that delivers the actual meaning"[2]. The sound comprehended by the auditory organ has been referred to as *Dhvani* and the sound that delivers the actual meaning is known as *Sphota*. The *Dhvani* according to the science of language reveals the eternal *Sphota* which alone can deliver the idea[3].

The concept of *Dhvani* is essentially a theory which envisages autonomy of poetic art. In his monumental work *Dhvanyolaka* Ananda Vardhana emphatically declared that *Dhvani* is a universal suggestive and evocative creative prowess, power and the very soul of poetry. He critically analyzed his own point of view and reached the conclusion that *Dhvani* is threefold. The first aspect of the *Dhvani* is known as *Vastudhvani* which is represented by an idea or a thought. The second aspect has been referred to as *Alamkardhvani* which is a presentation of an image or an *Alamkar* and the third one being *Rasadhvani* which represents and evokes an emotion. Ananda Vardhana regarded the great poetry as *Uttamakavya* or *Dhvanikavya*. Though Ananda Vardhana has in a way classified the three aspects of Dhvani but in fact main emphasis has been laid on the *Rasadhvani* by him. And Abhinav Gupta his great commentator, gifted with the creative maturity and aesthetic sensibility, explaining the *Rasadhvani* says that *Vastudhvani* and *Alamkaradhvani* are essentially components of *Rasadhvani* [4].

When we try to have a serious look into Lala's poetry, we feel that her philosophical as well as poetic orientation and training which she received from her *paramguru* Sidhmol is well manifested in her poetry. Since all the four schools of Indian aesthetics: the concept of *Alamkara*, the *Rasashastra*, the *Ritishastra* and the *Dhvani* originated in Kashmir and have somehow consciously or unconsciously influenced the creative faculty of Lala as her poetry is in a position to lend itself to all these schools of critical thoughts.

Lala's verses are representative specimens of poetic beauty and suggestivity that evoke the unparalleled emotive and evocative experience in the mind of a mature reader. This unparalleled emotive and evocative experience is essentially suggestive in nature and has been referred to as *Vyanjana* by Ananda Vardhana. The term *Vyanjana* is a multi-faceted term which Prof. Malik in his essay "Oriental Literary Aesthetic : An Approach Towards Definition" compares with the concepts of ambiguity of William Empson and plurisigination of Philip Wheelwright[5]. So *Dhvani* or

Rasadhvani is a critical concept which deals with the suggestive components of a poetic artifact and when we read Lala's representative verses we are not only fascinated by their suggestivity but by their profound sensibility too. As Ananda Vardhana has also very clearly stated that two main things bring poetry into being: one being the grandeur of suggestive thought, and the other artistic craftsmanship of the poet. We shall attempt to evaluate and examine two *vakhs* of Lala in the light of the above discussed critical school of examination. Let us first take this *vakh*.

Hachiv harinj petsive kan goom
Abakh chhan pyom yath razdani
Semanz baazras kulferus vaan goom
Teerthe ros paan goom kus mali zaani

(The arrow of my bow proved to be a straw;
An uncouth carpenter made my placial house.
I am a shop without shutters in a busy bazaar
I could not make it to the pilgrimage.
Oh Darling, none but I feel the agony.)

Look at the images, ideas, figures of speech and the suggestive and evocative power of emotions in the *vakh*. All the aspects of *Dhvani* have contributed to the making of this symbolic poem which is charged and pregnant with multi-dimensional meanings. Though all the images, figures of speech and ideas employed in the *vakh* do not seem at one with each other and look extraneous even then the element of their suggestive nature convert them into an autonomous and organic whole which evokes an emotion in the mind of reader. The words used in the poem look ordinary but Lal has used them creatively and artistically and has thus given out that the poet alone is the maker of her own world.

I will conclude with the evaluation of one more *vakh* of Lal according to *Dhvani*.

Nabid baaras ate gandul goom
Deh kaad hol goom heke kahiyo
Gore sund vanun raavan tyul pyom
Pahli ros khyul goom heke kahiyo

(The knot of the candy burden on my back loosened;
My back is hunched, how can I bear the burden?
The Guru's word evoked a sense of waste,
The flock is rendered shepherd less.

In this *vakh* too several visual images have been used to evoke a suggestive emotion. The words have been used in such a way that they can be evaluated according to different theories but the fact remains that the nature of the *vakh* is suggestive and a product of *Rasadhvani* the ultimate bliss of creativity. One may take up any of the representative *vakhs* of Lal Ded and may not feel surprised that it can be better understood and evaluated in the light of Dhvani. But that doesn't mean that we cannot benefit ourselves from various schools of criticisms of the world. My intention here is to invite the attention of Sanskrit scholars towards this aspect of Lala's poetry so that her poetry is best understood in its proper perspective.

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REALISTIC STRAINS IN KASHMIRI POETRY: LAL DED TO MEHJOOR

The term realism does not, like most of the modern literary terms, suffer from any particular semantic instability. I may not face much difficulty in reflecting on the basic facets of the term as I might were I assigned a title like modernism, post-modernism, structuralism or post-structuralism. That way I am fortunate enough and for that I must thank God.

I am not going to quote realists on the issue as the readers are well acquainted with their philosophical predilections as well as their priorities in their poetics. I may not, therefore, refer to Marx, Engles, Mao-Tse Tung, Matthew Arnold, Christopher Caudwell, Brecht, Lukacs and Arnold Hauser, nor shall I make any mention of their agreements or disagreements with regard to the nature and functions of art and poetry. Keeping in view the main current of their concepts (you may call them theories as well), I may, instead, try to present the essence of their ideas concerning realism.

Realism, therefore, as I have understood it--- means that art involves the artist's understanding of the society and that social understanding helps the individual to explain himself in terms of the social forces behind him. According to the realists an artist is a representative or an outstanding individual who takes or should take the social forces as a necessary stuff for better understanding of social life. He does not simply take them as a background to the social conflicts.

When one looks at art and literature, particularly poetry, one has to confess that realism is a misnomer, a paradoxical notion, and that one cannot easily conceive or visualize even poetry in particular have nothing to do with realism. They are essentially dream-works of the poet's imagination wherein a fusion of senses take place and a new organic whole comes into being. Poetry thus never reflects crude actual social life it rather represents an imaginative reconstruction of human life, and may or may not resemble the illusions of the realists regarding reality.

The poet always lives in the words of poetry. without having a specific reference to the external world. The distinction of the poet and poetry lies in this notion. The poet lives through his poetry in a unique world which is different from the world of realists and it is not mandatory that the world of his poems resembles the surface appearance of reality. The poet like other artists has also his own illusion of reality. His ideas regarding life and reality have never been the very same as are held by people in general. That is why the poet always feels himself maladjusted in his society and times. He has never been a democrat and has always discharged his duties as an artist under the dictates of his imagination— a creative faculty whose sole business is to entrain human senses by giving them an aesthetic feast.

Poetry comes into being through words which connote rather than denote. Great poetry is always pregnant with multiple meanings and no definite meaning of any great poem is possible as great poetry has always been multidimensional and can lend itself to any school of critical examination. If a poem is accurate, precise, simple and transparent, it is likely to lack characteristics of good poetry. A genuine poem is always ambiguous and unclear that is why translating poetry is not as easy as the process of translating fiction. The reason is that in poetry emotional associations are attached to the words, where as in fiction the words reflect the surface of reality or an illusion of reality symbolized by them.

Thus we may be justified in saying that a poem is composed of words while a piece of fiction is composed of scenes, actions, characters and a plot. Before concluding the introduction and coming to Kashmiri poetry a question arises: How incisive realism is as a critical approach? The answer, as Professor Lawrence Lerner suggests with special reference to Lakac's theory, is : not much not very. Professor Rehman Rahi has rightly said that Kashmiri poetry is a treasure trove of the spiritual, cultural, emotional and earthly experiences which Kashmiris had during the past several hundred years. Right from Lal Ded down to the end of the19th century, the predominant theme of Kashmiri poetry has been spirituality i.e., Sivaism and Islamic mysticism. The material and earthly aspects of life were ignored, even those aspects of life were thrown to the winds which generate a positive outlook on life.

Kashmiris over the centuries have never been allowed to live their lives according to their own wishes and aspirations, especially when we consider how they have remained subjected to tyranny and political exploitation in the past natural calamities also contributed to their misery. All this did not only encourage the trend of spirituality in becoming popular among the poets but provided them with a way out to get over the predicament, at least psychologically.

When we look at Lala's poetry at a glance, it is not difficult to visualize that she was a conscious artist having her own point of view regarding life and reality. Her poetics, along with that of Sheikhul-Aalam, is rooted in the philosophy of Kashmiri aesthetics. Nobody knows whether Lal and Sheikh had studied the philosophy of Kashmiri aesthetics or not, but even then one can very safely say that their poetics springs from the illuminating, comprehensive and brilliant discussions on the nature and functions of poetry by the great Kashmiri critics and aestheticians like

Ananda Vardhana and Mamata. A very good number of poems like Lala's *Vakhs* and Sheikh's *Shruks* are essentially aesthetic experiences rooted in the spiritual aspect of life but their imagery is borrowed from the world around. Lala's poetry has no significant reference to the material world, it rather refers to her inner landscape. There are verses, images and metaphors that speak of her times and her socio-political and religious milieu. It was her observant eye that saw an intellectual dying of hunger and a dunce beating his cook. She had the courage to attack the traditional religious belief and its practice.

As compared to Lala's poetry Sheikh-ul-Aalam's poetry has considerable social reference. Being a social reformer, religious leader and above all the torch-bearer of the Kashmiri people, he used his poetry as a strong tool to impart Reshi-cum Islamic teachings in the vernacular so that the Kashmiris outgrew their stereotyped social structures. He attacks the clergy in his sardonic and biting sarcasm. His main concern in his poetry was building of Kashmiri society on religious lines as after-life to him was more significant than the earthy life.

During the 19th century also emphasis on spirituality continued. The Kashmiri poets now showed no inclination towards earthly pleasure. True, it was during this time that Rasool Mir sang of human love as Habba had done during her time, but this exception could not change the literary scenario. He was a romantic realist as compared to his contemporaries as they preferred human beauty to spiritual beauty. The Kashmiris had seen the tragedy of life in all its nakedness during the 18th and 19th centuries. The plight of people living in the countryside, especially of the peasants had become worse. It was during the 19th century that Maqbool Shah, the author of great Kashmiri love narrative *Gulrez* composed his *Greesy Naama*. The poem, if we call it one, is a corruption of reality as it hardly looks at things dispassionately. Maqbool lampoons the peasant and puts him to utter humiliation. Walter Lawrence, who came to Kashmir in the last decade of the 19th century, although an alien, depicts the socio-economic plight and its impact on the character and personality of the peasant with considerable objectivity. Maqbool Shah was a *Peer* and the peasant *Mureed* could not oblige him. He therefore, could not hide his malevolence and could not control his harshness against him. Some friends may refute this fact saying that he equally attacked his own clan, but the fact remains that by writing *Peer Nama* Maqbool was just exhibiting his penitence for writing *Greesy.Naama*. Had *Greesy-Naama* been a good piece of art nobody would have objected to its contents as human emotions and feelings get sublimated in good art. With Maqbool *Naamas* the era of writing in the genre began but no *Naama* of merit was written during this period.

The images of the devastation, distress and sorrow caused by "one E and three F's", meaning earthquake, fire, famine and flood emerge with considerable intensity in the occasional poems of Wahab Parrey and in the poetry of his younger contemporary Haqani. Both of them have been able to draw pictures of socio-economic changes that took place in their times. *Sahlaabnaama, Atish naama Darveshnama* and *Beboojnama* are such poems which reveal the misery around the poets.

Unlike his Sufi predecessors Mehjoor tried to lavish his poetic skills on bringing out earthly themes. Mehjoor, essentially a romantic, was in love with life and its pleasures. It was partly because of his poetic efforts that the native melody that the Kashmiri language had lost was restored. His poem "The country damsel" shows his impatience with spurious love themes. The alien beloved of the Persian *ghazal* was replaced by the belles around as Mahjoor had the eye to discover the fairy of Cacauses in the country maid. But even then one cannot call it a realistic poem as it does not go far beyond the traditional abstraction though there are lines here and there which manifest a freshness of imagination. Though his poetic endeavours aimed at coming to terms with the socio-political realities, did not prove much significant, one can justly say that the socio-political consciousness gives his satirical poems like "Independence" and “Tulip” unsurpassed imaginative vigour.

WOMEN'S LITERATURE IN KASHMIRI

When we look at the annals of Kashmiri literary history, it is a pleasant coincidence to note that the earliest poems ever composed in Kashmiri were written by a woman, popularly known as Lal Ded in Kashmir. Though references have been made to other poets also but no considerable work of them is available to today's readers of Kashmiri and therefore Lal Ded is known, as well as recognized, as the pioneer of Kashmiri poetry who has not only composed poems of high merit but has also delved deep into the collective thinking of Kashmiris. She belonged to the fourteenth century A.D. and is known as the most popular and respected woman of Kashmir who not only guided Kashmiri people through her mystical thinking rooted in Kashmir *Saiva Darsana* but also entertained them aesthetically as poetry was perhaps the only medium of entertainment during her times. Though she is known and recognized as the pioneering poet of Kashmiri even then her poetic utterances, known as *Vakh*, do not seem to be the beginning of Kashmiri poetry they rather allude to a great literary legacy in Kashmiri. Her message is of brotherhood, forbearing and tolerance and her poetic tools tell of her poetic and imaginative powers. Her metaphors, symbols and other poetic devices manifest her artistic personality and manifold aspects of her creative vision and poetic genius.

The first and foremost connoisseurs of Lal Ded were Sir George Grierson, Richard Temple and Stein. Though all of them were Europeans, even then they not only enjoyed reading her poetry but also responded and reacted to it dispassionately and objectively. There are many myths that have gathered around her personality over the past several hundred years which shed light on her various shades of personal, spiritual and artistic life. She believed that all human fraternity is essentially one and all humans should try to see the unity of things around them. Prof. J.L.Kaul a celeberated writer and a formidable scholar and professor of English assessed and evaluated her contribution to Kashmiri poetry and wrote

> She is more significantly the maker of modern Kashmiri, language as well as literature. As a poet in her own genre *Vakh* as well as generally she remains unsurpassed. This appears to be the language of exaggeration; and I am conscious of the fact that often enough we have double standards for critical judgement which we use in favour of *Mahakavis* (the great poets) of modern Indian literatures. I am conscious also of my inability to put across in an alien language the full import and impact of Lal Ded's *Vakh*". [1]

Prof. Kaul has justly confessed that the poetic beauty of her ideas, language and form cannot be analyzed in an alien language as English as the essence of her *Vakhs* can be enjoyed and the niceties thereof can be scrutinized in Kashmiri only. Because translating poetry from one language into another is not always pleasant it rather deforms the poetic personality of the poet. However, one cannot help the process of translating her poetry into other languages as the message and meaning it is pregnant with has a universal appeal and is not only relevant to our times but it is also aesthetically sound and profound. Though her poetic genius which manifests a fusion of thought and feeling resists translation, still an attempt of translating some of her verses is made for her alien readers so that they at least get a chance to have a look at her musings.

My Guru uttered an oracle
And asked me to peer inwards
That changed my lot there and then
And I Lal danced in ecstasy

I asked the Guru time and again
Who hasn't a name how can one call him
Raising the queries I got exhausted
Something gushed out from nothingness

You are the heavens and you the mother earth
You are the dawn and you are the dusk
And the corn of sacrifice, sandal and flowers
You are the manifestation of all these
And how shall I pray to you.

After Lal Ded, Habba Khatoon is the most distinguished poetess of Kashmir who emerged on the poetic scene of Kashmiri in the 16th century and composed love lyrics known as *Vatsans* in Kashmiri. In these love lyrics a love-sick woman is the chief persona who sings of her love and passion for her beloved and also represents a sensitive woman's socio-political and economic predicament. These poems written in the most turbulent times of Kashmir history also tell of the hard times which a Kashmiri had to pass through and also of the political bickerings and conspiracies which were hatched outside Kashmir. Habba Khatoon is said to have been the queen of the last independent king of Kashmir Yousuf Shah Check who did not yield to the pressures of great Mughal emperor and fought his mighty power with courage, but was ultimately deceived by the great Mughal and arrested and sent to Biswak Bihar where he died in exile. There are some researchers who guess that Habba Khatoon went all the way to Bihar and is buried near her husband's grave at Biswak. The historians of her times do not make any mention of her in their chronicles yet a mass of myths, legends and narrative poems has gathered around the artistic personality of Habba Khatoon. She did not only contribute remarkably to Kashmiri poetry but also made commendable contribution to Kashmiri music. Her main contribution to music is known as *Rast-e- Kashmiri*. Her poems express her innermost personal feelings and emotions and also an assessment of the social moorings of the times, which held women in strong chains. Her poems, therefore, sing of human love and suffering and add a new hue to the colours of Kashmiri poetry.

I knitted soft gloves for you
Take pleasure from my pomegranate flowers
I am the earth and you the sky
You are the cover of my secrets
I am a feast and you are the guest
Take pleasure from my pomegranate flowers
O
I am not happy with my in-laws
Take care of my problems
Oh my Dear Parents
My childhood vanished away
Climbing up the hillocks
I had to suffer a lot
And endure deep agonies
Take care of my problems
Oh my Dear Parents

Though the *Vatsans* continued to be a powerful tool of expression for Kashmiri poets, the poetic form *Vakh* also remained one of the most powerful tools of expression in

Kashmiri that too for woman writers. After Lal Ded, Rupa Bhawani is another notable poet who employed the *Vakh* as her main tool of expression and expressed herself in this genre. She belonged to the 17th century and the accounts of her personal life are shrouded in mysteries. Only occasional folk legends and myths allude to her life but one thing is crystal clear that she sang of spiritual love and like Lal Ded her *Vakhs* are esoteric and are not as imaginative as that of Lala's.

> I passed through the path of my feelings
> And approached you through my five Indriyas
> It is your blessing I entered the territory of your light
> And by practicing the yoga
> I came across what truth was all about
> All the ways lead to the same destination

Rets Ded is another woman poet who was born in the19th century and died in the 20th century. She also wrote in the genre of *Vakh* and tried to enlighten her surroundings with the light of her inner and spiritual feelings. Her poems express that she was well versed in literature and Kashmir savism and Vadant. She respected all her male and female predecessors from whom she got poetic as well as spiritual guidance and inspiration. In a poem she pays tributes to her spiritual guides and masters.

> Like Lala I hid my self
> With the help of Rupa's silence
> I outpoured the inner light
> And Nundreshi told me the truth of the one
> And with the help of Mirza Kaka's knowledge
> I got acquainted with the light of wisdom

The twentieth century proved to be a period of renaissance for Kashmiri literature as various forms of literary expression were introduced in Kashmiri language due to the erudition of contemporary poets and writers. The forms of fiction, both long and short, the genre of drama and other genres were used by the litterateurs. In the mid fifties of the last century (20th century), the first Kashmiri woman fiction writer who carved out a place for her in the fictional world of Kashmiri literature was Taj Begum Renzoo whose solitary anthology of short stories *Alaav* (The Bonfire) proved a milestone in early Kashmiri fictions. Her stories are reflections of Kashmiri society and tell many a sad tales of the same. In the field of drama Shamla Mufti is a big name whose plays throw light on the different shades of Kashmiri society and its complexities. The main aim and objective of these dramas is to highlight the predicament of the parents of girl-children. Her most famous play *esy lukh* (We people) is a milestone in Kashmiri women- writings of her times.

Having said that Kashmiri women took to fiction writing and play writing in the 20th century with great enthusiasm the fact remains that most of the Kashmiri women writers preferred poetry as their main tool and form of expression. The most considerable and notable poetesses of the 20th century include Asha Mastoor, Naseem Shafayi, Bimla Raina, and Sunita Raina. Asha Mastoor expressed herself in traditional poetic forms while Naseem Shafayi is not only conscious of her times and the sensibility thereof but is also innovative in her expression. Her poems are marvels of art and touch innermost human feelings. She has feminist leanings and is known for her bold expression. Dr. Mehfooza Jan is another writer who has scores of books to her credit and is known for her boldness. Bimla Raina is a poet who believes in the spiritual aspects of human life and relatively throws to the winds its material dimensions. She writes her poems in the form of *Vakh* and Kashmiri Shaivism remains the main source of her poetic inspiration. Sunita Raina writes poems as well as Ghazals in which she gives way to her experiences. Her poems reflect on the predicament of the Kashmiri Pandits who left their homeland due to the present circumstances and are facing a tough life in exile.

Besides these poetesses some other women writers have made their presence felt and have earned some fame in the field of Kashmiri literature. Zaifa, Abida Ahmad, Feroza Shauq, Hamida Akhtar, Zaiba Zeenat, Rafiqa Asrar, Rukhsana Jabeen, Dilshada Shamsi, Fatima Hussain Mir, Misra Banoo,Wajida Tabasum, Munira Fatima, Shakeela Naqash and Nayeema Ahmad have contributed to the realm of literature in Kashmiri. Their writings are autobiographical in nature and the thought content of their writings is mostly based on socio-economic problems of the day and the issues of women in present day society. Last but not the least these women writers have infused fresh air into Kashmiri literature and have broadened its intellectual and artistic horizons.

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SHAFI SHAUQ'S POETRY : AN ASSESSMENT

> ...Science has thus become the Great Director, to whom the spiritual republics of religion and poetry are yielding up their autonomy in bloodless defeat.
>
> (Philip Wheelwright)

Professor Shafi Shauq has the reputation of being a most distinguished poet-critic and littérateur of contemporary Kashmir who has made remarkable contribution to modern Kashmiri poetry and literary criticism. Besides being a profound scholar, Shauq is also known as a literary historian and as a luminary whose insight has unveiled a galaxy of Kashmiri writers who were lost in the mist of darkness of time.

Contemporary critics of Kashmiri estimate Shafi Shauq as a representative postmodern poet and as one of the most genuine poets Kashmiri language has produced during the last millennium. Critics like G.R.Malik, R.L.Shant, Rafiq Raz, Rehman Rahi, Hakeem Manzoor,Gulshan Majid and Rasool Pompur describe him as a true poet of outstanding stature whom one could remember for all times to come.

The book *Yaad Aasmaanan Hiz* (Remembering the Skies, 2005)manifests that Shauq's contribution to modern Kashmiri poetry is manifold. He has enormously enriched Kashmiri poetry thematically as well as stylistically and has thereby developed the Kashmiri poetic idiom as a powerful and subtle medium of emotional and intellectual expression.

A bonefire in backyard,
Chinar-tree leaves on dry walnut twigs

Dancing flames of hues over gloving embers.
(The Here and the Now; tr. By the poet)

Revitalizing all the valuable poetic traditions of the land and bringing the poetic art in close touch with various world literatures, Shauq has succeeded in creating a poetry that reverberates with sensibility of the most sensitive Kashmiri living in the present-day world.

I came across him
Yesterday in the Chowk. When
The dusky fog was thick.
The man whose sight arouses a venomous tide in my eyes.
Who prides himself
To see me in distress.
The man whom I wish
An abyss at every step.
(I Met Him Yesterday)

Yaad Aasmaanan Hiz is a collection of poems and ghazals that infuse a new blood into Kashmiri poetry. Instead of reproducing, as do many of his contemporaries, the age-old feudalistic love-themes, tradition-ridden, sapless and spurious mystic outpourings and abstract and imitative and modernistic platitudes, Shauq in his poems is resonant with thoughtful musings of restless soul living in complex modern times enduring the pangs and agony of contemporaneity.

Yes, yes this is the site where they lived,
Rose early in the morning and slept late at night.
In spring they distributed walnuts
At the first furrow in the fields,
In summer, they sang under the scorching sun weeding.
On spring festivals they rushed outdoors in mad frenzy.

At times, swerved from straight roads to tread meandering paths;
When a cat mewed, children would giggle and guffaw unfettered,
And wept when they beheld a myna with a broken limb.
When their sons and daughters attained youth, they blossomed.....
They squabbled when angered, standing at their sills,
But anon they blushed with rue and coughed aloud.
They raised a hubbub when any of them ceased to be,
And cast forth oblations when a babe was born.
(Archaeologists at the Site; Tr. By the poet)

It is under Shauq's skilful treatment that one finds the short poem establishing itself as an authentic genre in Kashmiri as a specific and technically perfect form of poetic expression. Likewise he brought maturity to free-verse and blank verse forms and imparted intellectual verve to the Kashmiri *Ghazal* which for centuries has been feeding itself mostly upon naïve simplistic youthful yearnings and imagination and impoverished modernistic, fashionable jargon and clichés.

There was a time when Shauq's poems manifested themselves as verbal icons, but his poetic idiom has outgrown the cliché-ridden poetics of New Criticism and the poet has developed a fresh poetic idiom, confessional in nature and rooted in the psyche of Kashmiri society.

Both in nazm and ghazal Shafi Shauq's poetry is an honest expression of the fact that the poet has put in all his creative potential to rescue Kashmiri poetry from the freezing clutches of rigid Persian prosody which most of the Kashmiri poets have been using for long too mechanically to suit any fresh approaches and variant attitudes to things.

Shauq, by means of both his poetic composition and innovative mind paved the way for a liberal approach vis-à-vis the above mentioned prosody and discovered and devised alternative rhythms more consonant with the peculiar genius of the Kashmiri language.

> And in front of me a dark rocky wall, the frontier
> Without a beginning, without an extremity
> Neither a doorway nor a window
> Stretched and spread all around
> And in the back drop path way contracted
> All have dissolved in the dark wall
> And dark wall grows darker, darker and darker
> (The Alien)

Above all, the book has a strong creative potential which integrates intellectual toughness with imaginative warmth and music of mind. The poems in the book are admirable examples of a fresh poetic imagination transforming variegated human experiences into perfect artistic performances by dint of the masterly craftsmanship of the poet. Technically, the short poems in the book are looked upon as models of genuine poetry just as his *Ghazals* are admired for their thought-provoking emotional and intellectual depth and prowess. Shauq's is the poetry of significant human expressions pulsating with dramatic intensity and suggestive of deep and aesthetically tranquil pleasure.

To sum up, one can very safely say that the postmodern Kashmiri poetry is symbolized by Shafi Shauq. Apart from being a very high-ranking postmodern poet, Shauq has established himself as one of the most outstanding and sensitive literary critics of Kashmiri literature.

RAFIQ RAZ'S POETRY : AN OVERVIEW OF *DASTAAVEZ*

Though it is an embarrassing situation for me to comment on the poems of a poet who taught me the basics of Kashmiri poetry during my post graduation in the University of Kashmir in 1980's, I consider it an honour to write about his poetry as he grew into a legend when he was only in his early 20's. A poet, broadcaster, prosodist and recipient of Sahitya Akademi and State Cultural Academy Awards, Rafiq Raz has his admirers not only in the Valley but across the country as he writes in Kashmiri as well as in Udru.

The book *Dastaavez* (The Document) under review is the second collection of Rafiq Raz's lyrical poems. The first collection of his poems *Nay chhya naalaan* (The Lamenting Flute) was published in 1995 and was well taken and appreciated by the critics and connoisseurs of Kashmiri and got him the above mentioned awards. The present book mostly comprises his Ghazals and some occasional poems. In these Ghazals and poems written during the most turbulent years of modern Kashmir history, the poet has very aptly and dispassionately objectified the subjective and collective feelings of a people who had to face the tragedy of life in all its nakedness. Rafiq Raz portrays the spiritual crisis as well as the psychological predicament of Kashmiris within and without through images of freshness and involuted nature.

Whenever I look at the poems of Rafiq Raz I am reminded of the famous English Romantics: William Blake, William Wordsworth and S.T.Coleridge as his poetic imagination in a certain way is in tune with theirs. It seems that he paved the way to restore the sovereignty and supremacy of the spirit in the creative process, which had been ignored by his senior contemporaries excluding Late Abdul Ahad Zarger. I never mean Rafiq Raz derived inspiration from the above mentioned Romantics, all I mean to say is his stand-point and outlook emerge from the bosom of his own vision ---a vision spiritual in nature and deeply rooted in Kashmiri psyche. Rafiq Raz definitely shares one aspect of his poetic sensibility with the English Romantics and Kashmiri Sufi Poets: his instinctive belief and inborn faith in the world of the spirit. For Rafiq Raz the spirit is the essence of the absolute reality. Being a creative artist depending mostly on his imaginative powers and intuitive insights the world of Raz's art is a dazzling and bewildering gallery of artifacts which illuminate our vision and outlook and help us understand the glorious progeny and legacy of Kashmir.

The rivulets were yet to flow,
And the runnels were hidden in boulders.
Noise nor Sound nor Whisper was heard,
No storm did surge and no cloud of dust then rose.

Such verses of Rafiq Raz clearly depict a fusion of sensuous, intellectual and mystic sensibilities what Coleridge once said "The esemplastic power of imagination," and Richards translated into synsthesia in the poetry of inclusion and our Ananda Vardhan termed it as *Rasa Dhavani*. Like other genuine artists, Raz imbibed inspiration from various sources but got never swayed by the fascinating literary predilections, movements and critical jargons in vogue. Infact he himself is a trendsetter--a literary star-- around whom many literary satellites are revolving. As has been already referred to, the poetic style of Rafiq Raz is unique and its freshness has enticed most of his younger contemporaries who consciously and unconsciously try to write poetry in his style and idiom. It will not be out of place to mention here that his style would have been diluted had he not been a genuine poet who sincerely expressed his inmost emotional experiences through a subtle and concrete poetic expression that gives a pattern to his thinking and acquires a symbolic and archetypal significance. There are poets in Kashmiri who have become in certain way conformists and do not want to be different from Raz as the poet has achieved artistic beauty in his poetry and gained popularity among the literateurs as well as general masses. There are of course poets like Shafi Shauq and Gulshan Majid who are proud to be known as literary non-conformists and have therefore envisaged their own poetic beliefs practising them with full sense of creative responsibility. It is also noteworthy that they are not so popular as Rafiq Raz and his followers are.

The genre of the *Ghazal* has proved a magic wand for Rafiq Raz as it has not only helped Rafiq Raz carve out a respectable place for himself in Kashmiri literary history, but also established the *Ghazal* as a genuine and relevant form of expression in the most unconducive conditions for *Ghazal*- writing in modern times. His oriental sensibility has maintained and conducted him properly in these unfavourable circumstances and helped him give his pessimism, asceticism and fatalism a local name and habitation.

> Your own shadow may look attacking,
> Once the sun dawns you may not go out.
> Is it a deluge written on the wings of breeze!
> All the seven oceans waver.

The *Ghazals* of Rafiq Raz are built on an organic and systematic structure which has given a new life to Kashmiri Ghazal poetry: as his every successful verse is an experience having all ingredients of a short poem in its creative process though in a condensed and concize manner. In Frank

Karmode's words "Such poetic experiences emerge as aesthetic monads." The way Rafiq Raz writes poetry, that too in the form of the *Ghazal*, creates problems for a critic for it resists analytical and critical examination because of its lyrical fragrance.

Prof. Rehman Rahi is perhaps the first Kashmiri connoisseur who not only recognized the creative talent of Rafiq Raz, but also paid tributes to him for his remarkable contribution through his Ghazals to Kashmiri poetry.

Rafiq Raz opened "Charmed magic casements"
Lyrical is the collyrium-stained eye and the silence

Some friends claim that the poetry of Rafiq Raz has a close affinity with that of Qazi Ghulam Mohamad as the theme and the subject matter of their poetry remain the same. True it is that Rafiq Raz is a romantic like Qazi Sahib so far as the nature of his poetry is concerned, but the way he deals with his romanticism is quite different than that of the latter. Rafiq Raz has an inquisitive mind and seems to be confronted with the stinging questions concerning the mystery of life. He has definitely one thing in common with Qazi that is his nostalgic leaning. Qazi Ghulam Mohamad would himself describe the nature of his poetry "An intelligent child ---- The Chief Persona of his poems who makes his presence felt with full intensity in most of his poems."

But when one looks at the poems of Rafiq Raz the seriousness of thought, maturity of expression and profoundity of sensibility get manifested in a splendid manner. The reader not only enjoys the beauty of his artistic miracles but also feels the intense sense of innermost life coupled with wide ranging materialistic ramifications of post- modern and contemporary condition.

Every student of literature knows that the image of city is one of the most prominent images of modern and post-modern poetry as it symbolizes postmodern life. Rafiq Raz is a well read poet bestowed with creative prowess having the original outlook and has been able to make the image of city as one of his dominant powerful metaphors which gives expression to the pangs of a sensitive person confronted with the consumer and commercial culture of contemporary world. The image of the city frequently recurs in his Ghazals which makes his poetry symbolic genuine and authentic. Such images also manifest the glorious past and the dark face of modern times.

> Let us leave the city and populate the dreadful lands
> Let us entrust ourselves to calamities
> Let you sit here for a while and watch yourself out
> The regal splendours spring out
> From the niches and stairs

Rafiq Raz is a well-known prosodist who has written some brilliant essays on the prosody of Kashmiri poetry and has introduced diverse rhythmical patterns in Kashmiri Ghazal which in it's turn helped it broaden its rhythmic horizons. He employed unfamiliar Persian metres and made them popular amongst his contemporaries. His contribution to Kashmiri poetry in general and to Kashmiri Ghazal in particular will be remembered forever as he has given Kashmiri poetry a new vision and fresh expression.

CURRENT TRENDS IN KASHMIRI SHORT FICTION: AN ASSESSMENT

Short story or short fiction is a recent development in the literary scenario of the Kashmiri language and, when I use the word *recent,* it never means that short story has recently been introduced in the language as a literary form, it rather refers to an era of at least 60 years, and 60 years is not considered to be a long period in the literary history of people who inherit rich legacy of art and literature. What I actually mean to communicate is that short story as a literary genre is a new form of expression which has been passing through phases of variegated experience and has thus emerged as one of the most powerful creative expressions of modern Kashmiri writer. Secondly, I mean that words and terms like recent, contemporary, current etc., do not confine themselves to a period of one or two decades, they rather cover eras and epochs.

It will not be out of place here to refer to the fact that the first short story in Kashmiri was written in the early fifties of the last century and that it was because of the impact of the Progressive Movement that many literary genres, poetic as well as fictional, were introduced in Kashmiri which in their turn enriched its literary expression and helped Kashmiri literature broaden its intellectual and artistic horizons, both in terms of content and form. In the early fifties of the last century, short story did get introduced in the Kashmiri language as a short form of fiction and did attract many young writers. But, in spite of this enthusiasm, most of the stories of the times proved propagandistic and there are hardly any stories of the time that are known for their fictional and artistic beauty. It was a time when art and literature were supposed to have social relevance and ideological utility and the real artistic values of the beauty of art and literature were thrown to the winds for the sake of social commitment.

After the decline of the Progressive Movement in Kashmiri, new trends of writing in the genre of short story made their presence felt by way of handling new themes which were closely related to human experiences and the fresh approaches of artistic treatment appeared which helped Kashmiri short story acquire new dimensions of story-telling. Unlike the early short story of the early fifties of the last century, the short story of the sixties is a different story which tells more about human life, its perceptions and other aspects of human consciousness and gives less and less importance to the superficial layers of human emotions and feelings. The earlier story was usually one-dimensional as it was written on ideological grounds so that it helped social life achieve envisaged new horizons from socio-economic and political point of view. Thus we can very safely say that the early Kashmiri short story is politically and ideologically motivated whereas the later short story leaves behind the mundane worldliness and superficialities of life and tries to delve deep into the hard realities of life around and the dark recesses of human psyche which together help fictional art to come into being.

The earlier short story emphasized the socio-political and economic scenario and milieu and relatively ignored the individual with his predicament and the socio-economic chains and political moorings that held him very strongly. The personas or characters of the early short stories like the character of Rasul of the story "When the Light Dawned" by Soom Nath Zutshi or the Zoon Ded or her son Gulla of the "Reply Card" or the characters: protagonists, and antagonists of the other prominent stories of the earlier period were just tools in the hands of short story writers and were given a journalistic treatment so far as their behaviour and reaction towards their life around was concerned. The same kind of treatment was given to plot construction, structure and also to the point of view of the story and the language was not creative in the real sense of the word, it was rather journalistic in nature. The imagery, symbolism and real diction of fiction emerged in Kashmiri short story later when fiction writers ignored their ideological leanings and confronted the experiences of life with observant eyes and open minds. This shift or we may call it a departure helped the Kashmiri short fiction writer understand that it is not a person and his personal suffering that make a short story, but the personality of a character who emerges as a central figure in the story and around whom the whole action of the story revolves. Besides, this new attitude and approach of writing helped the Kashmiri writer to feel that it is not just a story that makes a short story but it is a well-knit and well-constructed plot that helps a story become a short story.

I must admit this fact that our modern short story writers, time and again, tried to deviate from the basic facets of the genre and form in order to prove themselves innovative, but they achieved fictional beauty and artistic miracles in their stories only when they adhered to the basics of the short story. It is also worth mentioning here that some of our short story writers uplifted the intellectual level of the genre, but at the same time adopted such symbolic expression as proved puzzling for the connoisseurs of the Kashmiri literature. It is an admitted fact that great thinking and great thoughts always help to create sublime art but this is also an important fact that mere dabbling in philosophical subjects proved detrimental for a number of short stories for they have not been provided with suitable creative treatment by their creators. True it is that every literary genre, whether it may be poetry, drama or fiction, ultimately proves helpful in comprehending various aspects of human life and its variegated hues and colours, but the essential qualification and recognition of a piece of art is possible only when it is in a position to presenting itself as an aesthetic feast for its readers and connoisseurs. Modern short story writers made short story a powerful tool of expression but some of them wrote such stories as do not contribute anything to Kashmiri literature in general and to the short story in particular.The modern short story writer knows it better that the art of short story writing is an art that is closely related to collective social life and that an individual's mental endeavours and complexes alone cannot help in writing, but the surroundings of the individual and his particular social locale helps the story to come into being. The writer, his social milieu and his times are complementary to each other in organic growth and development. Modern short story writer of Kashmiri knows these things better, he analyses them and ultimately has a firm faith in this literary principle that a writer along with his writing is closely related to his times and that he cannot help escape his times when he takes to writing.

As has been already discussed that short story has become a powerful literary expression in Kashmiri and as a result of that many short-story anthologies have been published during the last few decades and some of the worth mentioning anthologies are *Sath Sangar* by Akhtar Mohi-ud-din, *Pate laran Parbat*, *Halas Chu Routul*, and *Yath Razdhaney* and *Zool Aparim* by Hari Krishan Koul *Tsekrivyuh* by H.K.Bharty, *Acherwalen Peth Koh*, *Trikoonjal* and *Raevimit Maney* by Rattan Lal Shant and *Hardwaw* by Roop Krishan Bhat.

While going through the short stories included in these anthologies, it is all too evident that these stories have an intrinsic relationship with those stories that were written earlier and it is this relationship that makes the short story of today a contemporary story. Our modern writer tries to create something new either through his expression or through the nature of the story and, at times, at both the levels. The plot construction, characterization and setting of modern short story are totally different from that of the traditional one. The later stories by Akther, Koul, Bharti, Shant, Farooq Masoodi, Gulshan Majeed and the stories of their younger contemporaries are vivid, ambiguous and symbolic so far as the use of language and plot construction is concerned. The complexities of modern times and the rush of modern life have brought man to a predicament that manifests his helplessness and coercion of his times.

The contemporary short story deals with the themes of love, sex, absurdity and other socio-political issues but with a difference. The characters of the contemporary short story do get inspiration from the short stories of Franz Kafka, Faulkner, Joyce and other western writers and benefit themselves with their artistic skills and craftsmanship. Akther's *Tsas* (Trauma) reminds us of the famous short story of Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis" wherein the predicament of man is exhibited through the symbol of a cockroach. The absurdist outlook has become popular and has fascinated some of the genuine short story writers resulting in a very good number of absurdist stories that have enriched Kashmiri fiction. Some of the contemporary stories project contemporary human situation through symbols that are ordinary in nature but have gained extra-ordinary significance through the treatment that has been given to them by the concerned artists. The grass plant of *Samrath* by Akther, the protagonist of the *Sreny Khel* (The Deep Play) and the main character of *Tsekrivyuh* By Hraday Koul Bharti are some among such stories as have proved trend-creating stories in Kashmiri.

The theme of love has remained a dominant subject of Kashmiri short story right from its early days but it has touched new horizons at the hands of artists like Prof. Shant for instance in his short story *Trikoonjal* (Triangular) wherein the instinct of sex gives new meaning to love. The short stories of Farooq Masoodi like *Nargi Nad* and *Manti Pawan* also explore new dimensions of love and sex. The language of Masoodi is rebellious so far as social fabric is concerned. These stories attack the age-old and tradition-ridden value-system and envisage a new system of values. Dr. Talashi's story *Kadwachouth* is also a wonderful story in this context and has been appreciated by one and all and has been much debated upon. There are some stories wherein characters do seem searching for their cultural roots but the number of such stories is negligible.

Many of our short story writers try to write stories in a form that is closer to poetry. I am convinced that the times have changed and literary genres, whether poetic or fictional, have come much more closer to each other, but at the same time the fact remains that in spite of this closeness short story is a fictional form and it cannot help escape itself from the narrative elements; the short story as a story is essentially a narrative art.

During the last sixteen years some good short stories were written by Kashmiri pandits outside the valley. The dominant theme of their stories is love for their motherland which they left and their helplessness in the vast deserts of reality. One can feel the agony which the characters of these stories pass through, as the expression of these stories is pathetic, but objectively and dispassionately projected through the medium of art and, therefore, touches human heart.

Before I conclude I must confess that our senior short story writers are still ruling the republic of fiction and no young man of contemporary times has been able to carve out a comparable prominent place for himself in the realm of short story.

OUR CULTURAL MORES

You have to endure thunder and lightning
You have to endure embers in your palm
You have to endure lift up the Parbat on your back
Endure you have to encounter the dark in the noon.
(Shaikh ul-Alam)

The purpose of beginning this discourse with the English rendering of a well known and popular Shruk of Hazrate Shaikh ul-Alam, the poet-philosopher of the fourteenth century, called the torch bearer of the Kashmiri cultural ethos, is to reflect on the basic facets of our ethos and psyche that are rooted in spirituality. There is no denying the fact that we Kashmiris are and have been a forbearing, tolerant and self-restrained people who not only cherish and nurture universal human values, but also love to suffer for attaining the heights of virtuous life— the heights that make us suffer on terrestrial plane, but in the process of suffering, in turn, make us feel a joy for ever.

Right from the dawn of our cultural ethos down to our postmodern times, suffering, forbearance, and tolerance have contributed to the making of our collective psyche which in my opinion is the symbolization of universal human values which strive for the good and condemn the evil. At the same time, I may opine that these universal values do not belong to Kashmiris only, but to the whole of mankind, especially those people who are just and believe in humanitarian world-view.

A serious challenge has been thrown up by the new millennium to our rich tradition of values. We may turn away from the postmodern socio-political and literary theories, but we cannot evade the postmodern condition that somehow shapes our present life-style. Since change is the only thing in the world that is permanent and inevitable, we must have the courage to accept the hard realities of postmodern life--- a life envisaging a comprehensive change and encroachment upon the cultural contours and ethical boundaries of our spiritual republics.

Notwithstanding the fact that we are not a developed people in the modern sense of the word, we have been assimilating and imbibing influences from various directions in the bygone millennium and now we have begun to reckon with and register the demands of the new millennium. We are known across the globe for our strategic position in the politics of South Asia and therefore, in the geo-political Scenario, globalization is a reality for us too. But even then I feel that we have our own ethos, thought patterns and above all, our own value system which is universal in nature and which everybody among us should be proud of. As I have said earlier that alien attitudes and moral ideas have infiltrated into our ethical territory and are trying to become a permanent feature of our ethos and identity. We must feel it and feel it all. It is time that we rose to the occasion and give it a tough fight so that our cultural and ethical fabric retains its humanistic values that have been sustaining us till date though we had to pass through a long and dark tunnel of pain and agony over the years.

The most distinguishing feature of the Kashmiri ethos, to me, is what was of the Greco-Roman Culture: Stoicism. The Stoics believed since the world is the creation of divine wisdom and is, therefore, governed by the natural or divine law, mans was responsible and accountable and it was expected from him that he conducted himself properly and discharged the duties assigned to him by Devine law. Zeno, the founder of Stoicism held virtue in the highest esteem and condemned human sentiments and passions. Stoics also believed that universal force is noticeable in all creation and that human behaviour and deportment should be judged according to Divine law. In the *jus-gentium* (Law of nature), certain universal rights were extended beyond the rights of Roman citizens which taught more of duties than rights. It would allow landlords to keep serfs and haves to have slaves. But so far as modern concept of human rights and duties is concerned, it lays emphasis on the individual as a consequence of being human. It has a reference to a long ranging continuum of a value system that is universal in character and has in one away or another equal claim for all human kind. These rights are therefore comprehended to symbolize the individual and group demands that shape and share, respect, tolerance, perseverance and forbearance. The Kashmiri cultural ethos is a synthesis and a combination of two apparently unlike thought- patterns that spring from the oneness of man and the diversity of his unity.

The author of *The Tiger Ladies*: *A memoir of Kashmir* Sudha Koul, who is a proud daughter of Vetasta and presently settled in America, looks at this long ranging cultural combination and feels proud of the rich cultural legacy which she belongs to and which she feels deeply rooted in. She writes:

> Kashmiris pray to long gone Sufi mystics madwomen and madmen who are our poets and prophets. Our Sufism is a combination of the esoteric elements of Hinduism and Islam and gives the highest priority to what— is — not— of — this — world. With us reason is not everything and insanity demands instant veneration. We stand timorously at attention should a mad person enter our home. We make way for them for they are the last symbols of our Sufi past. Our literature is the legacy of these prolific men and women of "flashing eyes and floating hair.[1]

Now the question arises that how did this particular composite cultural ethos come into being and, for me, there is one simple answer that Kashmir has remained an abode of Reshis, Munis and Sufis. European scholars have had brilliant, exhaustive and considerably comprehensive discussions on this issue, but we the Kashmiris are perhaps the most proper people to deal with the problem and deliberate upon the subjects that are related to us. We are proud of our variegated faiths and beliefs because we do not confront but are rather in tune with each other. Right from the glorious Hindu past of Kashmir down to the illuminating advent of Islam, the Kashmiri ethos has remained intact though we underwent numberless changes in our life styles. Nefarious attempts were made time and again to disturb this harmonious cultural entity, but they never proved of any consequence. Lal Ded and Shaikul Aalam and other Sufi poets rose to the occasion whenever they smelt a rat. Lal warned :

> Look, Lord Shiva is watching out like the Sun,
> Treat Hindus and Muslims as one.
> If you have wisdom, consider yourself a sunbeam,
> Therein lies the knowledge of God.

And Shaikhul Aalm wished:

> When shall my Lord be gladdened
> With the one-ness of Muslims and Hindus.

Another Sufi poet expressed his sentiments:

> Do not consider your self different from that of others;
> And if you do so, you are wrapped up in an illusion.

So we can very safely say that ours is still a distinct cultural entity which is presently running through rough weather but nonetheless is deeply rooted in the inmost of our bosoms. This cultural entity believes in co-existence of

various faiths and beliefs and help us comprehend the presentness of our glorious past.
In the *Vedanta* the notion is :

> *aham Briham Asmi*
> *na dutai aste*
> Or
> *Aham boho siyami*

(Narayana created the universe and the creation of the universe was the result of God's will to see himself in diverse hues and colours. A *hadith* which is also considered to be a *hadith-al-Qudsi says:*

> Said Almighty Allah" I was a hidden treasure and desired to become known so I created my creation in order to be known."

The faith which I believe in and which I am really proud of, teaches me that I should build my own image through my actions and deeds so that people around me feel the essence and spirit of the faith concerned. But my faith at the same time teaches me that there is no provision to force anybody to accept willy-nilly any faith and is, therefore, at one with other faiths so far as ethical and moral values are concerned. Our cultural ethos has risen from the religious ideals that teach us more about our duties than our rights. It teaches us to take care of the people around and to relatively ignore one's own self interests. It enjoins us to sacrifice our enjoyment and pleasure for the well-being of others.

It is because of these teachings that we have been sustaining our value system in the most hostile surroundings wherein human condition becomes absurd and wherein one is not in a position to relate himself to the circumstances that hold him very strongly. Our Saints, Reshis, Munis have experienced the absurdity of life in all its nakedness long before the pioneers of absurdity in our times. That is why they shunned the earthly life and its fascinating charms and pleasures. The main thrust of their teachings is renunciation that helps man sacrifice his self interest for the betterment of the people around.

Being a student of Kashmiri language and literature I have throughout felt that we do not have a rich treasure trove of words to express experiences of various natures. There can be a reason, but the point I wish to make is that we are very shy but sentimental people who get charged with emotions and cool down instantly. Let us take the English word "rape" for instance. We have not an equal for the same and there is reason that we have never been rapists and as such there is no word for the nefarious act in the language.

But now things have begun to change at an alarming speed. Change is beyond our control but if it is organic, there is no harm in accepting it. There was a time when Hindu and Muslims boys would play, eat and read together and would behave like brothers. But after the mass-migration of the Hindus, a gulf was created between the two communities. I had a stunning experience this year when a ten year son of a Hindu friend of mine asked my younger daughter very bluntly that if she was a Muslim, then how was it possible for him to accept her as his sister. The fault does not lie with the boy, nor with his family but with the politics that has polluted even the psyche of those children who were born outside Kashmir but have their deep roots in the Kashmiri soil.

If we love our ethos then it is our moral duty to work very hard for things around are not that favourable and conducive and that much water has flowed down the *Vetasta.* I am afraid that we shall not be in a position to bridge this gulf that has widend over the past several years.

Sudha Koul Shares my apprehensions in the *Tiger Ladies* from which I quoted earlier. But a noted Kashmiri Scholar Professor G.R.Malik has some reservations regarding these perceptions and apprehensions, though he fully takes cognizance of the psychological and emotional plane of

Sudha Koul and gives her full credit for creating a marvel of art. Prof. Malik writes:

> I believe whatever has befallen us is an aberration and before long we shall be back on the track. A civilization that has nurtured humanitarian values in its lap for countless centuries cannot be extinguished out of existence by forces of darkness.

NASEEM SHAFAI'S POETRY: FEMINIST AESTHETIC

Naseem Shafai is a distinguished name in contemporary Kashmiri literature and she is well known for her feminist leanings and unconventional poetic idiom. There is a somewhat confessional and autobiographical mode of expression mingled with a mild touch of boldness and frankness in her poetry as it reveals her personal, sensuous and emotional experiences as well as the collective problems and issues of the present-day women. Naseem was born in a traditional family in Srinagar where education for girls was a must but where reading of novels and short stories of Asmat Chugtai and Saadat Hassan Manto was considered almost a sin. And Naseem did commit this joyful sin. She would read the novels and short stories in her bedroom when everyone in the family went to sleep. She had an irresistible passion for reading literature and knowing more and more about various aspects of human life.

I have known her personally for the last twenty five years and can therefore very safely say that her earlier readings of Asmat and Manto, two distinguished names in Urdu fiction known for their original viewpoints with regard to man-woman relationship and effects thereof on them, proved helpful to her in shaping her poetic sensibility and imagination. She has been adventurous and challenging since her high school days when she was asked to pass the matriculation examination with science subjects which she was least interested in.

Naseem's maiden poetic anthology *derychi mutsrith* (the Window Open, 1999) was well taken in the literary circles. Being essentially a humanist, Naseem is romantic in nature and also in her approach to and treatment of her subjects and themes like childhood, girl child, love, marriage, divorce and other feminist issues. Naseem believes that love and respect are the only way out that help humans understand life in the real sense of the word. She at the same time believes that human relations develop in a society which is humane in character and that a healthy and pleasant social milieu is needed for the development of personality. Besides, she is conscious of the fact that the inner predicament of a woman and the reality around her are poles apart.

> You always bring along the sun
> Under your scarf
> Oh frenzied lover!
> Could you rouse this fast sleeping city
> (Lines from a Ghazal)

In her poems, Naseem potrays a woman who is maladjusted in her married life. The woman in her poetry is shown strongly adhered to the social moorings which ultimately make her forsake her love, wishes, dreams, paternal home and what not. The chief persona of many of her poems is either a dancing deer-engrossed in her dreamland, urging her to fly in open skies or a fascinating and dignified tigress conscious of her prowess and dignity. The metaphor of the dancing deer symbolizes the innocent but coquettish teenage girl who still lives in the inmost of Naseem's soul and who is least concerned with the happenings in the mundane world. The dignified tigress represents the poet's persona who has attained a position in the society and has developed a respectable personality. But what happens to these living characters and what sort of pain they endure inwardly is expressed in the below mentioned poems.

What a stillness I have been trapped in ?
How dark the night has grown?
The exhausted tigress
Might have fallen asleep
(Ineffable call)
Afterwards nobody knew what happened,
Only a soft knocking at the door was heard;
Neither the deer nor the tigress was located,
I lost my identity and now nobody knows me.
Being held in these chains, look!
Rust has formed on my body
(The confession)

In a poem, "After Receiving A Letter", the addressee receives a letter from her childhood friend of her native village. Both the childhood friend and the addressee of the letter are essentially two different faces of the same personality. The metaphor of the childhood friend symbolizes the teenage girl with a strong longing for her childhood memories and dreams in the depths of woman's soul, and metaphor of the addressee represents the helpless married woman of presentday times. The village and the city in the poem are also two powerful metaphors representing two different life-styles: simplicity of yesteryears and complexity of post-modern era respectively. The words addressed to the addressee are full of wistfulness and nostalgia which fascinate the chief persona and convince her to visit her native village.

Those pine groves and spring slopes,
Are waiting for you as usual,
With a clear bosom and open arms.
Come, let you throw this shroud away,
At least for a moment for me.

But the addressee gets conscious in the next moment and expresses her helplessness:

At first I was enticed,
Then suddenly my body trembled
Lest somebody should take note of me,
And city-guard's eyes catch me.
This chain might sound louder.
Oh my friend, my childhood friend,
I have read your letter
Do not feel hurt.
In my reply to your letter
If I write
Do not write me henceforth
Neither you shall remember me,
nor shall I remember you
(After Receiving the Letter)

Most of the poems of Naseem Shafai, unlike those of Kamala Das, satisfy us on the aesthetic plane. Written in an unconventional poetic style, these poems do not satisfy the reader who believes in traditional aesthetic. They have a universal appeal but do not give shocks to the connoisseurs of contemporary Kashmir as does the imagery of Kamala Das. and that of Judith Wright in her poems like "The Looking Glass", "Jaisurya" and "Woman to Man".

Getting a man to love you is easy
Only be honest about your wants as
Woman stand nude before the glass with him
Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers.
(The Looking Glass)

Only that matters which forms as

toadstool under lightning and rain the soft
Stir in womb, the foetus growing.
(Jaisurya)
This is the strength that your arm knows,
The arc of flesh that is my breast,
(Woman to Man)
O move in me, my darling
For now the sun must rise
(Women's Song)

Naseem's poems manifest the fact that she is a sensitive woman endowed with artistic skill and imaginative warmth. She knows how to sublimate and objectify the innermost, personal and emotional experiences through her art by avoiding the grotesque incongruities of the crude realities of life, and that is perhaps the the secret of genuine art.

Naseem is proud of being a woman and does not seem to bother about the equality of man and woman. She rather asserts with confidence that man is a victim of his passion and as such needs woman to control his desires. She is capable of performing the role of a daughter, sister, beloved, wife and above all a kind mother. Her main subjects are solely related to women such as a girl-child, love, motherhood, divorce, paternal home and other women-related problems. The childhood memories and the love for her paternal home are among some of the recurring themes of her poetry wherein a portrait of a young newly married girl, encountered with certain degree of alienation in her maternal home, nourishing strong nostalgic feelings for the days of her carefree unmarried life emerges.

Instantly the ascetic stood up
And threw the ashes in the yard,
I had hardly played for a moment
With my little doll.
(Lines from a Ghazal)

Oh time, how disgusting you are
Not only in your vision, but in your bosom too.
I see niggardliness
Stop for a while and do not open the door.
Whenever we had an encounter,
You were always in haste.
I am yet to play with my dolls
And have to take leave of my friends.
(Time)

The passion for paternal home finds expression in poems like "The Baby or The Tigress" "The Paternal Home". Some verses of the above mentioned poems that recall the delight of the past and its associations read as:

When the leaves of the chinar
In your paternal home yard
Shall get reddened with passion,
You should come along
With your desire-filled eyes.
(The Baby or The Tigress)

Yes this path,
Leading to my paternal home,
Shrouded in the clouds of dust.
No riches are so precious for me
As this dust is.
I shall lit the threshold of my paternal home,
with my blood
I have not visited them for quite some time,
My blood is frozen in my veins.
(The Paternal Home)

Naseem Shafai raises her mild voice of protest against the tabooed age-old society where the birth of a girl child is considered to be inauspicious, where divorcing a woman is a routine of the day and where wife is supposed to behave as a shadow of her husband or as a non-entity. Naseem is herself a mother of a lonely son, enjoying a pleasant wife-husband relationship as is evident from her poems. Her feminist sensibility is close to that of Judith Wright and is far away from the feministic approaches of Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath. Being an artist she has been able to compose such poems as reflect the psyche of the girl-child parents, the predicament of divorcees and the assertion of a strong headed woman who believes in her own personality rather in being the shadow of her husband. In a poem entitled "The Solicitude" the persona (mother) is worried for her darling daughter who is in a sweet slumber and shall leave her someday for distant lands. In the poem the mother is addressing her husband suggesting him not to disturb her sleep as they do not know what is going to happen to their daughter when she gets married. The mother expresses her love for her daughter with a sense of misgiving.

When someday she shall land in alien lands
What kind of people she shall encounter—
Neither you nor do I know:
Rouse her gently with tender calls.

(The Solicitude)

In the poem "The Divorce" the expression is that of irony, satire, anguish, solitariness, sorrow and remorse. The poet persona is addressing a divorcee and shares her grief and melancholy. Coupled with her personal feelings with regard to the divorcee, the poem has become a pathetic piece of poetry reflecting on the consequences of the divorce and the legacy of women folk since the dawn of human civilization.

He deserted you?
Don't be regretful and repentant
And don't be lost to the world
You are a living soul
Hold your precious life `in your strong hands.

In another poem, "Me, Neither A Shadow, Nor A Reflection" emphasizing the significance of women's contribution to human civilization both on spiritual and human levels and their commitment to relationship with God and man, the poet asserts with full confidence:

Dariing I am not like you
Nor do I resemble the reflection of your dreams
You have your own personality
I do possess my own identity
Leave this egoistic arrogance
You might enjoy a fete of colours;
I have grown up differently
And you have to reconcile with it.
(Me, Neither A Shadow, Nor A Reflection)

Naseem Shafai is a Kashmiri and is rooted in a particular cultural ethos and cannot therefore afford to write on the feminist subjects such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, etc as are very commonly found in the writings of Sylvia Plath, Kamala Das and, Judith Wright. The thought stream of Naseem's poetry and her treatment of themes have a close resemblance to that of Urdu poet Parveen Shakir who died some years ago in a road accident in Pakistan.

At the end of the day she ends up as poet of love; she may seem to some of her critics a poet of sex as her occasional verses can somehow lend themselves to this school of examination. Naseem, no doubt conscious of the beautiful contours of woman's body which fascinate man, doesn't emerge as celebrant of body. She is of course the only Kashmiri poet who has loved, kissed and then confessed.

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A SURVEY OF ART AND CULTURE IN THE CHAK RULE

The Chaks ruled Kashmir for a brief period of time; yet these people made a remarkable contributiion to the realm of learning, art and literature. The Persian language had already stood elevated to the status of official language during the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin. His main priority was an over all development of Kashmir. He had left no stone unturned to bring about a renaissance in Kashmir by promoting arts and crafts, patronizing literature and litterateurs and by improving the socio-economic conditions of his times. The Persian language had considerably flourished in Kashmir and had become the language of the educated people. Some historians say that it had even reached the far-flung villages of the valley.

But after the death of Zain-ul-Abidin, due to political bickerings, rivalries and quick changes of power and kings, art, literature and other creative activities were thrown to the winds and brought to a miserable naught. That is why the period from 1470 to 1554 has been remembered and recorded by almost all the historians as a dark age of our history.

But fortunately it was during the Chak rule that the activities regarding art and literature revived. No doubt the political bickerings, rivalries and quick changes of power and kings did not stop, yet the Chak period is remembered as a period of art and learning. It was partly due to the Sufi institutions and partly due to the legacy left behind by Zain-ul-Abidin that led the Chaks to encourage them.

Chronicles throw enough light on the fact that almost all the Chak rulers were emancipated people. Some amongst them were profound scholars and literati of the day. Suka, a contemporary historian had recognized Ghazi Shah as one of those Chak rulers who were well-versed in literature and achieved excellence in the field. He also refers to Husian Shah and Yusuf Shah and considers them enlightened people. According to him both were good poets as well. It will not be out of place to mention here that a considerable number of Persian scholars had arrived in Kashmir during the Chak rule and were well-received by the people and rulers of Kashmir. Some of these scholarly personalities had served in the royal courts also.

Abul Fazal in his Ain-i- Akbari has referred to one Baba Talib Isfahani, an eminent scholar of his day who arrived in Kashmir and joined the court of Ghazi Shah and remained in the court for almost thirty years. He has also mentioned that during the reign of Husian Shah a poet-calligraphist Mir Ali arrived in Kashmir and composed a beautiful poem wherein rich tributes were paid to the beauty and glory of Kashmir. The authors of *Tabqat-i-Akbari* and *Tarikhi Frishta* have referred to Ghazi Shah as having been a generous king who had a great regard for scholars and scholarship. According to them, he had even overcome his personal feelings of enmity towards his rival Rafiq or Hafiz Mirza Husian and had spared his life as a mark of respect which he held for the talented and gifted people. Rafiq Mirza Husain was a well-known scholar and musician of Akbar's Court.

According to Haider Malik Chadoora, Husain Shah was a lover of art and poetry; he cherished and nurtured aesthetic values. He had a galaxy of learned men around him. He used to sit and discuss with them at least once in a week. Aazam Deedamari has stated that Mulla Bagi, Mulla Nami I and Mulla Nami II served in the court of Husain Shah. The same was the case with Ali Shah. He had the privilege of having associates like Shaikh Yaqub Sarfi, Ahmad Kashmiri, Baba Daud Khaki and Mazhari. He also spared a day in a week to talk to these great people and Sufis of the day. He patronized the poets, Amin Mustaghni and Mirza Ali Khan and gave them a chance to serve in his court. According to Haider

Malik Chadoora the latter lost his life while fighting Mughal general Raja Bhagwan Das. According to the anonymous author of *Bahristani Shahi*, Yusuf Shah had a tremendous command over Persian and Hindi, besides Kashmiri.

The Chaks tried their level best to uplift art and literature in Kashmir. According to the most historians, this upliftment was one of the greatest achievements of the Chaks. The literary personalities who worked wonders in their respective fields need not any introduction as a lot has been said written about them and their works; I must however at least mention the names of the most promininant people of the time : Shaikh Yaqub Sarfi, Baba Daud Khaki, Hubi Kashmiri, Baba Nasib Din Ghazi, Mazhari and Habba Khatoon.

Modern historians of Kashmir refer to a group of five Kashmiri painters who were associated with the court of Akbar. According to them Abul Fazal for the first time wrote about the group. According to Precy Brown:

> Very delicate effect is said to have been obtained by the Kashmiri painters. They allowed water to stand until it had completely evaporated, leaving a sight sediment, which they used as a background tint to the profile of a portrait as it left a faint but charming contrast of tone between the flesh colour and ground. [1]

Dr. Sufi has also referred to a set of twenty four paintings of Chak period lying in Victoria and Albert Museums, but no more details are available regarding the issue.

The Chaks promoted the art of calligraphy also. According to historians only one style of calligraphy i.e., NASAKH was in vouge before the Chaks. But a new and more refined style known as NASTALIQ was introduced in the Chak period by Mir Ali who had come from Persia to Kashmir in Husain Shah's reign. Historians have also referred to one Mohammad Husain who joined the court of Akbar after the fall of the Chaks; on whom the title of Zirin Qalam was conferred him by Akbar as a token of the acknowledgement of his extraordinary skill. According to Baba Daud Khaki, Yousuf Shah was himself a gifted calligraphist and had rendered all help and patronage to the calligraphists.

During the reign of the Chaks, Kashmiri music touched its heights. Historians write that some of the Chak kings were themselves good musicians. Suka has referred to Husain Shah as a great patron of musicians and dancers. He wrote:

> The king witnessed the dance of beautiful women and looked at their youthful beauties and heard their songs and gave them lots of gold and silver.[2]

Haider Malik Chadoora also writes that the king spared every Wednesday of the week solely to be in the company of musicians and dancers. Yousuf's reign has been the most significant phase of music in Kashmir. According to the chronicles he attracted celebrated masters of music from Iran and India and passed most of his time in their company. Habba Khatoon, the lyricist-singer evolved a new style of Kashmiri music known as *Rast-e-Kashmiri*.

With the fall of the Chak dynasty Kashmiri music lost the state patronage and did not receive any special attention from the authorities for a long time.

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1. Percy Brown : "Indian Painting under the Mughals", p.121.
2. Mohibul Hassan, *Suka cf Kashmir under the Sultans.*

PERSIAN PROSODY AND KASHMIRI POETRY

At the outset, I would like to steer clear of the relevance of the traditional prosody in contemporary genuine poetry and would rather emphasize the fact that rhythm and metre have all along been organic components of poetry and that versification alone cannot make a poem. It is, perhaps, a poet's extraordinary creative personality—endowed with imagination and sensibility—representing the intensely individual music of his thought patterns that shapes his art. A poem or a verse of a *ghazal* is considered to be an organic whole wherein words and other poetic vehicles are not ornamental and decorative, but are contributory to the making of the organic unity of that linguistic structure. Like words and metaphors, metre and rhythm too contribute towards creative power of poetry. There is no denying the fact that total metrical rigidity has and will continue to hinder the organic growth of a poetic experience and shall rather encourage a kind of poetic composition that is mechanical and frigid, lacking in imagination, intensity of thought and insight and, above all, the powerful expression, the essence of poetry.

The earliest Kashmiri poems , *Chume padas*, *Vakhs* and *Shruks,* belonged essentially to an oral tradition and were primarily didactic and spiritual in character. The *Vakhs* and *Shruks* composed by the pioneers of Kashmiri poetry Lal Ded and Sheikh ul-Alam, are undoubtedly heights of a long ranging poetic legacy. The prosody of the *padas, vakhs* and *shrukh*s is in many ways different from that of Sanskrit wherein every hemistitch has equal number of feet; whereas every hemistitch of a *vakh* or a *shruk* generally consists of four stressed syllables. It seems that in these prosodic variations metrical patterns were admitted by deviation from the norms, if there had been any. As a result of it, the most creative and imaginative expressions came into being through the variegated sound effects that we find in these *vakhs* and *shruks*. A European scholar Sir George Grieson, who made a remarkable contribution to Indian linguistic studies, wrote with reference to the prosody of the *vakhs* of Lal Ded, that this type of prosody existed nowhere right from Iran down to the North India[1]. He further wrote that despite the number of the feet in some of the lines being equal, this prosodic scheme did not emerge as a pattern as it is strictly followed after the second or third halves of the poem[2].

The *Vakhs* and *Shruks* were composed in a literary scenario that had imbibed and assimilated influences from Sanskrit poetics— a poetics that illuminates the inquisitive minds and connoisseurs of the contemporary literary world belonging to the East as well as the West— retaining the phonological niceties of the Kashmiri language and could not strictly follow the quantative prosody of Sanskrit. It is a well established fact that the prosodies of Sanskrit, Arabic and old Persian bear a close resemblance to each other and are based on quantative systems. The system of prosody in Sanskrit is at many a place loose and flexible and that this looseness and flexibility is all too evident in Hindi poetry[3]. Abur Raihan Al- Biruni wrote in his book *Kitabul Hind:*

> The different poetical works of the Hindus contain a great number of metres. The names of the metres differ according to the number of syllables and also according to the verses which follow. For they do not, like all the verses of a long poem belong to one and the same metre. They use many metres in the same poem, in order that it should appear like an embroidered piece of silk.[4]

Since the prosody of Arabic, old Persian and Sanskrit had this kind of characteristic prosodic affinity,modern Persian and Urdu also felt comfortable with most of the metres of Arabic prosody while maintaining their own phonological niceties which in turn brought about some changes and variations in the metres. These changes and variations are known as *Zihafat*.

With the spread of Islam in Kashmir, the Persian language became the lingua franca of the valley like other regions and cultural zones. As such, Persian poetry got introduced in Kashmir, though the genres of *mathnavi* and *ghazal* developed as distinctive poetic forms in Kashmiri at a later stage. With the emergence of poets like Mir Syed Abdullah Baihaqi, Fakhir, Mohamood Gami, Rasool Mir, Maqbool Shah, Persian prosody gained popularity as these poets employed the Persian metres in their ghazals and *mathnavies* while adhering to the old Kashmiri folk qualitative metres in their *vatsans* for being an indigenous Kashmiri poetic genre and form, and still being employed by some traditional poets as their main form of poetic expression.

Sir Aurel Stein keenly observed some variations in the folk metres of Kashmiri when Kashmiri folk songs were recited to him by a traditional *cyat-gur*. He wrote:

> After examining number of these compositions as recited by the professional cyat gur I arrived at this conclusion that the metre of these poems is based solely on the number of stress-accent syllables counted in each line or pada, no regard is paid to the quantity.[5]

It is true that Mahmood Gami, Rasool Mir and other masters of the language did acquire the craft of Persian prosody and handled some of its metres well, but the fact remains that they had to encounter the inevitable interference of the phonological features of the Kashmiri language during their creative process. Notwithstanding these undeniable facts, it should be borne in mind that Kashmiri poets by and large adopted Persian prosody as it helped their poetic expression in being more rhythmic, comprehensive, diverse and dynamic. Syed Muhammad Hadi Fakhir was perhaps the first Kashmiri poet who composed *ghazals* in Kashmiri with thorough mastery in some of the metres of Persian prosody. Here is an example of his two Kashmiri verses taken from one of his ghazals written in *Bahri Ramal Musamman Mahzoof* which manifests his command over the metre:

Faailaatun__ Faailaatun__ Faailaatun__Faailun
Doori duethom noori mah zan poori saaman ostay
Roo darakhshan ,moo pareshan,khush kharaman ostay
Fakhir andar ishtiyakay sarvi naazay seem tan
Parahan chak az gireban taa badaman ostay

The most popular metres along with their variations employed by the Kashmiri poets are as under:

(1)*Bahre Hazaj.* The standard foot is *Mafaeelun*, four times repetition in *Musamman Saalim* and three times repetition in *Musaddas Saalim* along with the variations:

a. *Hazaj Musamman Maqbooz*– four times repetition of *Mafaailun.*

b. *Hazaj Musamman Ashtar*– two times repetition of *Faailun Mafaeelun* in one hemistitch.

c. *Hazaj Musamman Akhrab* ---- *Mafool Mafaeelun* twice in one line.

d. *Hazaj Musamman Akhrab Makfoof Maqsoor* ----- the four feet being *Mafool Mafaeel Mafaeel Mafaeel.*

e. *Hazaj Musamman Akhrab Makfoof Mahzooful Aakhir* ---- the forefeet being *Mafool Mafaeel Mafaeel Faoolun.*

(2) Bahre Ramal --- standard foot: *Faailaatun* ------- four times and three times repetition in *Ramal Musamman*

Saalim and *Ramal Musaddas Saalim* respectively. The varied popular forms of this meter are:

a. *Ramal Musamman Mahzoof*---- the feet being *Faailaatun Faailaatun Faailaatun Faailun.*

b. *Ramal Musamman Majnoon*--four times repetition of *Failaatun.*

c. *Ramal Musamman Mashkool*---two times repetition of *Failaatu Faailaatun.*

d. *Ramal Musamman Majnoon Maqtoo*--- its feet are *Faailaatun Failaatun Failaatun Falun.*

(3) *Bahre Rajaz*---standard foot *Mustafilun*--- four times and three times repetition in *Musamman Saalim* and *Musaddas Saalim* respectively. The other variations in this meter are *Rajaz Musamman Matvi, Rajaz Musaman Matvi Majnoon, Rajaz Musamman Majnoon Matvi.*

(4) Bahre Kaamil--- standard foot *Mutafaailun*---- four times and three times repetition in *Musamman Saalim* and *Musaddas Saalim* respectively.

(5) *Bahre Mutaqaarib* --- standard foot *Faoolun*----- four times repetition in *Musamman Saalim* and three times repetition in *Musadas Saalim* with variations such as *Mutaqaarib Musamman Mahzoof, Mutaqaarib Musamman Maqsoor, Mutaqaarib Musamman Maqbooz Aslam, Mutaqaarib Musamman asram Saalimul Aakhir.*

(6) *Bahre Mutadaarik*----- standard foot *Faailun*---- four times repetition in *Musamman* along with the variations such as *Mutadaarik Musamman Mahzooz, Mutadaarik Musamman Majnoon.*

(7) *Bahre Munsara*---- this meter has neither been used as *Saalim* nor as *Musaddas*. Some of its varied forms used by Kashmiri poets are *Munsara Matvi Maqsoof, Munsara Musaman Matvi Manhoor,Munsara Musaman Matvi Majdoo.*

(8) *Bahre Muzaare* ---- It has been used in standard form nor has anybody used it as *Musaddas*. In this meter *Faailaatun*

is *Mafrooqi* i.e. *F-aa-ilaaatun*. The two popular most varied forms of this metre used by the Kashmiri poets are *Muzaare Musamman Akhrab, Muzaaria Musamman Akhrab Maqfoof.*

(9)Bahre Mujtas --- like Urdu poets it has not been used by any Kashmiri poet in its standard form. The popular variations in this form are *Mujtas Musaman Majnoon Mahzoof Maqtoo*--- feet being *Mafaailun Failaatun Mafaailun Falun and Mujtas Musamman Majnoon* ---- feet being *Mafaailun Failaatun Mafaailun Failaatun*. It will not be out of place to mention here that *Mujtas Musamman Majnoon Mahzoof Maqtoo* became very popular in the second half of the twentieth century and is now one of the beloved metres of Kashmiri *ghazal* writers. *Mujtas Musamman Majnoon* was for the first time used by the modern Kashmiri romantic poet Rafiq Raaz in his famous ghazal

tse chhuy kunyar ti labi kus wan jaayi jaayi nisf reets
bi chhus kunuy ti vasakh na mya nish khudayi nisf reets

---provoking Prof. Rahman Rahi to compose his famous ghazal in this metre.

zaban te drai bewafhi kathan ti phor matsar aekher

It is also worth mentioning that a poet like Mirza Ghalib wrote a solitary Urdu ghazal in this *bahr*.

ajab nishaat se jallad ke chale hain ham aagey
kyi apne saaya se sar panu se hai do qadam aagey

(10) Last but not the least is *Bahre Khafeef* ----this metre has only one popular form in Kashmiri i.e. *Faailaatun Mafaailun Falun.* As has been the tradition in Urdu it is neither used in standard nor in *musamman* form; it is rather popularly used in *Musaddas*.

I do not feel shy of the fact that no Kashmiri poet till date has employed the 24 measures associated with the *Rubai* form with total mastery nor has any poet been able to compose a *Rubai* in the real sense of the term. No doubt the

Kashmiri poets have composed .four-lined poems with considerable poetic beauty but these cannot be taken as *Rubaiyyat* as their prosody is different from that of the *Rubai.* The four lined poems written by Ghulam Rasool Nazki, Prof. Rahman Rahi, Prof. Rashid Nazki, Prof. Ghulam Nabi Firaaq and Prof. Marghoob Baanhaali cannot lend themselves to the prosody of the Rubai.G.N.Khayal's translation of *Rubaite-Umar Khayaam* are remarkable contribution to Kashmiri poetry. According to Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki, Khayal seems to have excelled khyam at many places. Having said this the fact remains that even Khayal too has not adhered to the prosody of Rubai as the phonological features of Kashmiri language and its natural rhythm are not in tune with it.

During the second half of the twentieth century some exhaustive and comprehensive discussions were made on the prosody of the Kashmiri language and during the last ten years some good books on the subject have been published by eminent scholars of the Kashmiri language. Amin Kaamil ---poet critic and researcher---was perhaps the first Kashmiri scholar who initiated this process of discussion. He scanned the *ghazals* of Rasool Mir and Mehjoor and asserted that they could not strictly stick to the Persian prosody in their *ghazals* as the interference of the phonological character of native language was inevitable[6]. In Prof. Rahman Rahi's well documented book *Kashmiri Poetry and its Prosody* one can read between the lines that Kashmiri poets have employed and will continue to employ the Persian prosody not with rigidity but with some looseness and flexibility desired and demanded by the phonological features of the vernacular[7]. Prof. Shafi Shauq[8] and Rafiq Raaz[9] have also considerably contributed to these discussions.

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHORT POEM IN KASHMIRI

A cursory survey of the poetic genres of Kashmiri poetry makes one note that even without having any specific and comprehensive conception of the genre of the short poem, and acquaintance with its technicalities some Sufi poets of Kashmiri composed, though occasionally, such lyrics as possess almost all the intrinsic and organic ingredients of the genre of short poem. This notwithstanding, it is a historical fact that the short poem as a poetic genre was consciously introduced in Kashmiri poetry in the early 30's of the 20th century when poets like Mehjoor and Azad used this new poetic device to reflect the socio-economic and political landscape of the times. Mehjoor and Azad were realistic poets as compared to their predecessors who utilized their artistic potentialities to portray their spiritual as well as mystic experiences. Being conscious of their time and its demands, their poems represent specific and individualistic points of views unlike those of the Sufi poets whose lyrical poems are by and large stereotyped. Some of the poems of Mehjoor and Azad are as powerful and imaginative that they do not enlighten their reader aesthetically only, but also intellectually. Poems like *Grees Kour* (The Peasant Girl) *Lalo LaLo Ha Guli Lalo* (Oh! Tulip) and *Yamberzil* (The Narcissus), by Mehjoor and *Deryav* (The River), *Pantasder* (The Cascade), *Tarakh* (The Stars) and *Aarwal* (The Brier) by Azad envisaged and envisioned a fresh socio-political artistic outlook which helped Kashmiri poetic articulation to broaden its range and horizon and feel the fresh political and intellectual whiff of the subcontinent. These poems , written in a hazy as well as an uncertain political atmosphere, though optimistic in nature, are considered as milestones in the history of modern Kashmiri poetry as they paved the way for describing the contemporary condition of Kashmiri people, who had suffered, both socially and politically, over past several hundred years for no fault of theirs. In these poems the image of Kashmir and the Kashmiris emerges with full intensity and the reader empathizes with their personas. Though Mehjoor and Azad proved to be trend-setters with regard to content and form, the hangover of several hundred years mystic tradition did not allow them fully to come to terms with the reality around. That is why in the poem '*Grees Koor*' (The Peasant Girl) no distinct manifestation of the peasant girl emerges. It is rather an abstract and amorphous image of the girl blurred by the clouds of the age-old poetic predilections. Though there are occasional verses in the poem that take care of the persona of the poem, but as a whole it is an abstract poem. The poet no doubt gets rid of the tradition-ridden myths and legends of central Asia and takes cognizance of his surroundings, his past and above all the beauties around, the poems of Mehjoor proved beneficial for Kashmiri poetry as they introduced a new poetic diction and formed a fresh creative idiom which helped his younger contemporary Azad to express himself comfortably.

Azad was conscious of the poetic genius of Mehjoor and made a brilliant and exhaustive discussion on his poetry in his famous critical treatise *Kashmiri Zuban Aur Shairi* (The Kashmiri Language and Its Poetry). Though appreciative of Mehjoor, he himself was a committed poet who believed that art and poetry are supposed to enrich life and its values. His poetic diction as compared to that of Mehjoor is not that chiselled as it ought to have been, even then his creative vision and imaginative impulse fascinate the reader and transport him to unknown poetic and ideological republics where no Kashmiri poet had been to before. His poetic diction was yet to mellow to its consummation, that he died.

He suffered poverty, but did not yield to the political pressures. His revolutionary ideology, intellectual emancipation, and poetic genius proved as a rebellion against the politicians of his times, that is why he was forgotten and ignored by the political forces of the time and died in the most distressing conditions. His revolutionary ideas needed a fresh idiom for description. An unfamiliar poetic voice and style came into being and proved *avant-garde* for the poets who were associated with the Progressive Movement. He rejected cliché-ridden metaphors and similes and confronted with the language which helped him and his younger contemporaries like Nadim, Kamil, Firaq, Rahi and others to write in the vernacular.

Mehjoor and Azad thus introduced the short poem as a potential poetic device in Kashmiri and popularized it among their younger contemporaries. As has already been said Mehjoor employed the form to represent the socio-political moorings of his times, we can therefore justly say that most of his poems are political in nature. It is also a fact that only those political poems of Mehjoor achieved artistic recognition as are a fusion of thought and senses.

Gulale lolechi mashali zalan
Tami noore roshan gaste Akash
Yemberzal Shabnamuk mas phire piyalan
Sangarmalan peov Pragash.

"The tulips will light up the torch of love
And its radiance will illumine the skies
The Narcissus will pour the vintage into its goblets
The sunlight has dawned on the mountain summits."

Nozukh vaniji Keme varidatan vatenovoi Tse azar *tate cha yute chi hish berahi tate cha yoothoi gatekar.*

What agony has pierced through your bosom ?
Does such dark reign there too!

Yemberzal (The Narcissus) is the most significant poem of Mehjoor so far its creative atmosphere and linguistic structure is concerned. According to Prof. Rehman Rahi the poem is an exceptional piece of art as it is not in tune with the over all approach of the poet with regard to life and its ontological aspects. The poem reflects on the significant dimensions of life and death and makes the reader participate in the drama happening in the poem.

Yemberzal lajines davas geyes haran ba Kasvene kiya
Dapan chas Subhekis vavas baharas Shabnamas vane kiya

Me Narcissus was brought to this miserable naught
Taken aback, whom to share with the Wonder!
What shall I tell the morning breeze
The spring and the dew.

Azad, as has already been referred to, confronted with the poetic norms in vogue and rebelled against the conventional themes and thought patterns, and as such could not look at life from Mehjoor's point of view. The theme of death could not attract his artistic personality as he had a positive outlook. Like the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, he believed in a bright future and life-generating vision. His distinct poetic sensibility and thought process were dynamic and therefore demanded a new and concrete poetic imagery. One of the best poems of Azad is *Deryav'* (The River), a symbolic poem exhibiting his ideological leanings and creative implications. The poet has chosen the metaphor of the river as an objective correlative for escaping from his personality and to overcome the overflow of his emotions. The language, tone and dialogues of the poem are dramatic in nature and, to use Eliots words, the poet has successfully got over his intensive emotion and has dispassionately described his experience. It is also a fact that there are some verses in the poem which are not in tune with the spirit of the poem, even then it is considered as one of the most remarkable masterpieces of early 20th century poetry because of its symbolic features.

Kanan Khambren khayan khashan pakan chos manz gaten gashan
Na chos mohtaj shabashan na chos mushtaq ginde bashan
yivn chom zindagi hund soz safran manzilan andar

I run through boulders, stones, moats and valleys
In the dark and in the light
I need no praise nor do I crave for playfulness
I feel the pleasure of life in the goals of its journey.

The poets who were associated with the Progressive Movement in the early 50's of the 20th century made the genre of short poem more significant and authentic creative tool. It is a different story to tell that to popularize the basic principles of the Progressive Movement no device proved of any avail, yet the fact remains that the poets associated with the movement contributed to Kashmiri language and literature considerably. Their poems dealt with the theme of humanism, and its related issues. This is also a fact that from artistic point of view most of their poems written in that period are weak and loose as the poets were more concerned with the contents of the poem and no serious thought was given to their form and language.

The main cause of this state of creative barrenness was perhaps the artificial and unrealistic approach and less artistic treatment of the theme of the poems. Besides, the poets would ignore their creative urge and rather use their poems for the propagation of the basic principles of the Progressive Movement. In spite of this creative void, one cannot ignore those valuable and occasional poems that were written during this period. These poems have a creative potential and aesthetic appeal for the modern reader too, as the treatment of their form and approach to the theme are creative. Though in these poems too the basic issues are socio-political, yet their form, structure, language and tone help them become organic wholes. They are closer to human life and its various situations. Among these poems *Mecham Aash Paghech* (I Am Hopeful about Tomorrow.), *Kawan Wunnam*, (The Crow Spoke to Me), by Dinanath Nadim, *Dusa* (Blanket) by Aarif, *Yarebuluq Sehar* (The Dawn on the Quay) by Kamil, *Fun Barai-Fun* (Art for Arts Sake), *Subhuq Maqam*, (The Tone of the Morning) by Rehman Rahi and some other poems by their contemporaries deserve a mention.

Me cham ash Paghech Paga Sholi dunya
Dohus gash huri gul te gulzar prazlan
Zameenus Sisar lagi te Subzar prazlan
Vachas manz humis lole phanvar prezlan

I am hopeful about tomorrow
When the surroundings shall dazzle
The day will be brighter
And flowers of different hues shall glitter
The earth shall warm up and greenery lush
And from his bosom shall gush out
The fountains of love.

The above-referred poem is one such exceptional poetic composition which is objective so far as its style is concerned. The poet has successfully structured the poem and has objectified a very subjective kind of experience. The same is the case with the poems of Aarif, Kamil and Rahi which have already been referred to.

With the decline of the impact of the Progressive Movement across the subcontinent Kashmiri poets too distanced themselves from the ideological quagmire of the Progressive Movement and began to ponder upon the complexity of the terrestrial aspects of life and its characteristic problems. Nadim, Kamil, Firaq and Rahi composed poems with the help of their literary erudition, artistic vision and contemporary sensibility and wrote fascinating poems which deal with the basic issues of human life. The above mentioned poets succeeded in establishing their styles and projecting their artistic vision. *Kath Durwaze Peth Ghare Tam* (From Kathi Durwaza to Home) by Nadim, *Zero Bridge* and *Pren Shahrah'* (The Bright Highway) by Kamil, *Bulbulas Kun* (To the Nightingale) and *Bagus Manz* (In the Garden) by Firaq and *Takhleeq* (The Creation), *Qari Darya* (Inmost of the Ocean), *Pai chu Zulmate Wazan* (Life Emerges out of the Dark) by Rahi, and like poems are the manifestation of this new creative approach.

tot kiya ba Chukh
Pansus Peepin
Vuf dith zan tsij
me te gates peepin
tot kiya ba chukh
traisha cham ha.

"You have fever"
'A whistle for a penny'
'As if it flew away'
'I too want a whistle'
'You have fever'
'I would like to have some water'

dah wari bronh te ye kul aes yetsi sen baban
boni peth aes gatsan menze yethai pathi boliya.

Ten years before
The brook was as deep as it is today
Perching on the branch of the chinar
Some bird would sing the same way.
(*Dahe wuher*/ (After Ten years)
Yeme fazahe manze chi dapan akh wath
Kus tsali hasti hindi hate nebar

Passing through these heavens
Who could out step
From the walls of his being.

Chi katiya khab voni tabeere rustai
Tela kanh chare kertav char sazav
Vonay Sooroi me voehnay chum vochum kiya
(Tem Dupnam)

Many a dream is yet to be interpretted
could somebody apply a cure to my agony
I haven't enjoyed all the hues of life yet.

The short poem in Kashmiri thus established itself as an authentic creative vehicle during the 70's and 80's of the last century and attracted a galaxy of poets who employed this formless genre with all their creative craftsmanship and imaginative skill. Rahi and his prominent contemporaries put to use this new poetic device and a new era of poem writing ushered in Kashmiri. The subject matter of these poems is socio-political, modernistic, psychological, sensual and other issues of the contemporary life. Most of these poets had been the students of English language and literature which helped them imbibe influences from the rich literary tradition of the West. Some of their poems are considered to be the representative poems of the 20th century as they deal with the existential problems of the poets concerned and generate an objective point of view with regard to their approach to life.

The Impersonal Theory of T.S.Eliot and the discussions of other significant critics of English literature also played a role in shaping the creative structure of modern Kashmiri poem as the poets expressed their subjective emotions in a much more dignified and objective form.Even some of the age-old poetic genres of English such as the Sonnet and the Ode were put to use by some of the above mentioned poets. The Sonnets written by Nadim, Firaq and the poems like *Dramun* (Regurgitation) *Baas* (A Feeling) , *Rood* (The Rain), *Sonth* (The Spring) by Rahi and *Marsi* (An Elegy) and other poems by Kamil enriched the genre.

Preth Tarfe cho nafsa nafsi hund aalam badlie nazare divan
Preth qatre chu khoonuk zante vanan voni kota choi unikiya kiya choi
Shafqat pansav manze kathepilwan muhabat garzan hinz zeth katha

From every direction
One is trapped in the self-centeredness
Every drop of blood asks more and more
And the feeling of love is expressed
Through the image of money
It is a long tale of self-centeredness
(*Te Bai- Fursat* /Again a Respite)

Tim asi kolan del kheth moklamit
Te be osus atatse tele sadaki peth
Taxi hagran hindis atsen musimas

Dramun karan.

They had finished taking the barks of the trees
And I was on the cold metalled road
And the continuous flow of taxis and wheels
Regurgitating
(Dramun/ Regurgitation)
Hata sa hay dosto, hum saukhan ham damoo
Kansi ma yad chov-toti kenh diyan hue
Posh asan chi kith,

Friends, fellows and companions
Does anybody amongst you remember
Or have any faint idea
How flowers look like.
(Merci)/ (An Elegy)

The above referred poems make it very clear that they are the product of an urban backdrop and the imagery is also urbanized. Beside these poets Arjun Dev Majboor, Muzaffar Azim, Ghulam Nabi Khayal, Hamidi Kashmiiri, Rashid Nazki, Naji Munawar, Qazi Ghulam Mohamad, Marghoob Banihali, Chaman Lal Chamn, Ghulam Mohammad Shad, Moti Lal Saqi, Zarif Ahmad Zarf, contributed to the genre considerably.

I had a lot to tell,
But, alas, my tongue falters,
My shadows went past;
And my wistfulness disappointed me.
If I reveal,
What I had to bear with yesternight,
You might go mad
And take to wanderings.
(Arjun Dev Majboor: The Man Lamenting)

The darkest

piece of land
with a clear bosom
fecund and hopeful
bearing
some seeds
looking like sand grains.
(Muzaffar Azim: Yearning)

If the skies remain ovrcast
right from the evening,
it is a popular myth:
evil spirits enter the houses
through lattices and crevices.
My vision is incarcerated
and the casements of my imagination
closed.
My beloved moon, too,
might have fallen prey to Rahu
(Ghulam Nabi Khayal: The Mirages of Dreams)

I am entrapped in apprehensions
my musings make me frenzied;
the dark night fastened its chains on the earth.
Outside the fort
a solitary chinar
is visible in the dark.
(Hamidi Kashmiri :The Vision)

The dove has left for
unknown lands.
None can spot
a shade in the wasteland,
Ask your shadow
what befell on the blind night
frightened in the journey
and sunny shadows
my fellow travellers.

(Rashid Nazki : The Shadow)

An ancient city
walled by loft stone-fort
as if the sky is the limit.
Two Abyssinians
standinding at the entrance
naked swords and spears
keeping them firm in their hands.
(Qazi Ghulam Mohamad : An Ancient City)

I got you a jingling chain,
I employed the goldsmiths from all the lands.
This long magnifying golden cahin.
Introspect and ponder over a while:
How did I put it on you
With chaste hands.
And even then you go on barking!
(Marghoob Banihali : A Feeling)

I am in a dilemma,
lost in the bewilderment of thoughts:
whom should I look toward?
And whither should I bow my brow?
Rebellious times , or the wandering waves?
(Chaman Lal Chaman: The Light)

Yesterday, as well
on the 22nd of December
you and I sat at this very place,
the threshold
step to witness the the sun-set
there on the cliffs of Kunsarnag mounts.
There, where the peak
looks like a bull's hump.

The sun had set while we kept sitting
here at this very spot.
Heneceforth, too,
on this date
one shall see it setting there.
Next year, and then year after year…too
The sun shall set.
And shall plunge deep into the Kunsarnag
Never to surface again.
(Naji Munawar : The End)

In this letter
if the verses singing of my love
are not in tune with the music,
you must not react.
Some uncouth lover composed them
in a state of frenzy.
I shall light the candle of love,
in the hinterland of my bosom
and shall keep it burning
in the whirlwinds of time.
(G.M.Shad)

There are only a few
now left residing in the mansion
sobbing and whining
and envisioning the side-walls
crumbling down
and rendering them to helplessness.
In the vision of hope,
they envisage: it has withstood ages and epochs.
And be that as it may do for us too.
But instantly, I foresee the crematorium
set ablaze in flames.
(Moti Lal Saqi : The Mansion)

During the 8th decade of the last century three prominent young poets Shafi Shauq, Rafiq Raz and Gulshan Majeed made their presence felt through their poetic compositions as they presented a virgin kind of imagery in their verses which determined their individual styles and thought patterns. Rafiq Raz confined himself to the *Ghazal*- writing though he has been writing occasional poems also. His poetic talents are essentially based on a Neo-Romantic sensibility having its roots in mysticism and religion. Shafi Shauq and Gulshan Majeed opened a new chapter in the history of Kashmiri poetry through their innovative and *avant-garde* expression and a sensibility which are yet to be fully appreciated by the critics of Kashmiri literature.

Rafiq Raz ornamented his poems with a fresh romantic fervour while Shauq and Gulshan revolted against the traditional themes and their patterns. Rafiq Raz created some beautiful and valuable metaphors and Shauq and Gulshan deliberately withdrew themselves from the traditional figures of speech. They instead created new myths in their poems and through them infused a new life in Kashmiri poetry. M.H. Zafar, Bashir Athar, and Fayaz Dilber also enriched the form in terms of themes and expressions.

Na voch me noore yupis manz so gami gam yeeran
Na voch me zoon phasametse makaye kandas manz
Yi kiya na gardi gubari na qafilie dramut
Yi kiya chi sarki vochan may kunath
muday gandi gandi

Neither could I see the hamlet
Floating in the flood of refulgence
Nor could I spot the moon trapped in maize plants
How is that!
Neither a cloud of dust rose
Nor the caravan left.

Why is it so?
That routes keep gazing only at me.
(Rafiq Raz :Picnic)

Te pate
Kuli godan hinzi jayi khudi yoot path kun
Shehlinlad koli manz na koni lini palas tsulte
Lukan khoshikh Kanan hund Katsakh levi levi
Zasme thechimatse.

And then
On the spot of the tree stems
Only ditches left behind
In the fetid brook no water beetle
Is seen on the slippery boulders
And the jaws of people have given up
Licking the mass of dried boulders
(Shauq : *Neab* /Address)

Shame Batse Khetse adi dan livith
Kachi odroi volun razi peth bon
Vahrovun pan
Nari khunwath tamath basayas
Zange.

Shame Batse went upstairs
Swabbing the hearth
And picked up her wet panty from the rope
And stretched her body
Even arms, elbows seemed her
Legs
(Gulshan , A Day-A Rotten Pear)

He gave his value-judgement
on the consciousness
with preconceived values in mind.

I never gazed at him.
Nor did I seek any justification from him.
He came to me and asked:
"What stuff of truth you are?
Look your eyes are shrouded in mist."
(M.H.Zaffar : Flocking Birds)

Cities have become desolate
villages reduced to rubble and ruins.
Ring-dove and turtle-doves feel suffocated.
Owls on the helm apprehensive
the skylarks might sing.
They converted the paradise
into an inferno and wrapped
the sky in the mesh of sun beams.
(M.H.Zaffar : Consciousness)

Here is a poem by Bashir Athar:

HOLE IN THE PLATTER

Both of us would share
the same platter
and taking rice mixed with milk.
Even though you maintained
your identity, and I, mine.
All of a sudden,
we were taken unawares.
The platter fractured,
the rice and the milk dispersed.
You became yourself
and me, myself.
Now, we eat
in separate plates. And
have divided rice as well as milk.

But the only remorse
we are filled with is: we were caught unawares.
The platter we used to share
was bored through.
And only a young snake
sipping the milk oozing from the platter.
And growing into a python.

These poems provide the evidence that the short poem has become a forceful poetic vehicle in Kashmiri and that writing in this form is inevitable as this is the form in which modern poet can express himself with authenticity. *Ghazal* writing may not go a long way in Kashmiri, though it is still the most popular genre. The form of the *Ghazal* is a collective way of expression whereas the short poem is a formless form capable of expressing the most personal experiences of a poet in an objectified manner.

KASHMIRI LITERATURE: POLITICAL MOTIFS

The 20th century, in general, and its second half, in particular, proved a renaissance for the Kashmiri language as it was during these times that Kashmiri poets bade good bye to the classical way of looking at things. Mehjoor and Azad started this process and their contemporaries put all their efforts together to make it a movement which ultimately resulted in a cultural re-birth. Mehjoor, though conscious of the political tendencies and priorities, was essentially a liberal, while Azad was a committed and revolutionary writer influenced by the zeal and fervour of Iqbal's poetry and warmth of humanism. Both of them were proud of the rich and glorious past of the land and wished the same to continue and flourish in future. Being conscious of the political happenings in the sub-continent they smelt a rat and rather felt intrigued that something was wrong with the socio-political harmony in Kashmir. On the one hand, they reflected on the essential facets of Kashmir personality and, on the other hand, lamented on the then prevailing political situation.

I too produced great Yousufs and Dilarams
Some are sleeping in their graves
And others cremated in crematoriums.

Here Yousuf is a metaphor of the valour and bravery of the Kashmiris symbolized by the lost sovereign king of Kashmir and Dilaram a symbol representing the wisdom and intellectual leanings of the people of this land. Though Azad was a Marxist, he believed that religion could not divide humankind as humanism is an inttrinsic characteristic of every religion.

In this world how can you decide

Who is an alien and who is yours?
Muslims and Hindus are one
Listen carefully, this is my message.

As has already been referred to, both the poets were representative Kashmiris, they extoled a several hundred years old tradition of brotherhood and utilized their artistic talent to preserve this great legacy. Though the new emerging socio-economic and socio-political scenarios were not favourable for the cultural ethos of the land, Mehjoor and Azad sang of eternal human values as they had firm faith in man and believed that man is essentially the crown of the creation and should prove himself worthy of the same, which he is certainly capable of.

O man you were the light of the wisdom
And got turned into an inferno
You brought a bad name
To the whole human fraternity
And still don't feel ashamed .
(Azad)

Mehjoor was apprehensive of the emerging situation that made him to write in one of his poems:

Forget about your differences
Love each other
The Muslims are milk
And the Hindus candy
Mix the candy and the milk
And be at one with each other
(Mehjoor)

Mehjoor was associated with the Kashmiri movement and wrote songs of patriotism, envisioning a Kashmir where justice, humanism, and brotherhood would rule. In his famous poem "The Sun Dawned on the Mountain Peaks" he wrote:

Darkness has disappeared
And Sun has dawned on the mountain peaks.

The political elite of Kashmir forgot about the socio-economic welfare of the common masses and Mehjoor felt alienated and therefore lampooned the politicians in strong sarcasm.

The cloud of freedom
Showers the west
And here empty vessels are making much noise.

Azad died in 1948 and had not to face the realities that Mehjoor confronted with. The sense of alienation in Mehjoor grew stronger day by day as in the 19th century England William Wordsworth was disillusioned with the French Revolution. Mehjoor, too, was disappointed by the behaviour of the persons who remained confined to the corridors of power. The edifice of his dreams thus came crumbling down.

Mehjoor and Azad made the beginnings of the modern Kashmiri poetry and their fellow poets associated with the Progressive Movement propagated that literature must actively participate in nation-building and wished that artists rose to the occasion and nurse communal harmony and brotherhood. Poets like Nadim, Arjun Dev Majboor, Ghulam Nabi Firaq, Rehman Rahi, Amin Kamil and Ghulam Nabi Gowhar wrote profound poems and reflected upon the times.

These poets also got disappointed by the political happenings in the erstwhile Soviet Union and the political changes occurring in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. They deliberately tried to turn their faces from the political reality around and got fascinated by the contemporary trends in western literature particularly English. They escaped from their social and political responsibilities and were drawn to the aesthetics of modernism. Even their modernistic poems shed enough light on the Kashmiri condition though in a vivid and imaginative form. Like the Sufi poets of the 19th century they were pessimistic and suffered from a sense of alienation from the life around. Their main concern remained the classical and universal themes like terrestrial love, the horror of death and other themes.

In spite of this state of affairs, the reader of Kashmiri poetry comes across such poems as *Mafi Nama* by Rehman Rahi and *Qaseedei Be Shane Jam* by Muzaffer Aazim which are powerful political satire.

If truthfulness is a sin
Then I must be forgiven
If my tongue has fallteered
My life might be spared
Why are you that enraged?
(Rahi)

We are not really civilized
We are inhuman from the beginning
How can I look at your face
My agony makes you pale
This bread and butter is your alms
My sound health is because of your bounty
(Muzzafer Aazim)

These poems and the like were written in the period when the new criticism had become a craze for Kashmiri poets and they would write poems mostly of pessimistic nature. Rahi and Azim wrote these poems but these poetic compositions never have any significance in their poetic career as they are known for their other poetic features. Most of the poems of this period are pessimistic and existential in nature and deal with the innermost problems of man.

In this world
Lal, Haba Khatoon and Yazid
Dancing on the slippery sand
Look like buffoons
Even being wronged.
(Rahi)

> The fresh step and the new moment
> A whirlpool of uncertainty
> (Shauq)

During the sixties of the 20th century the short story established itself as a fictional form in Kashmiri. After analyzing the Kashmiri short stories, especially those written by Kashmiri Pandits, one comes across an amorphous sense of alienation. Here is an excerpt from the short story of one of the most outstanding short story writers of Kashmiri Hari Krishan Koul:

> Mataji Maya does not know much, the building is neither a temple nor a mosque it is rather Pakistani embassy- I mean Pakistan office.
>
> Poshikuj could not digest it, "She tries to befool me, but lie has no legs to stand upon. Nobody dares to invoke the word Pakistan in Kashmir where you have Muslims all around and this daughter-in-law of me is deceiving me.
>
> (*Taph* /The Sun Shine)

The protagonist of the short story Poshikuj breaths a sigh of relief after reaching Delhi at the residence of her son where every body around is a Hindu, the baker is a Hindu, vegelable vender is a Hindu and so on and so forth. After spending a few days in Delhi she feels a sense of alienation and tries to get it over by going back to Srinagar. The story was written in 1967 when G.M Sadiq was at the helm of affairs. Poshikuj, being an illiterate Kashmiri Hindu woman in the short story, unwittingly throws enough light on the psyche of Kashmiri Hindus in those times. Kashmiri Pandits had developed a sense of alienation due to the formation of Plebiscite Front and its ramifications.

Akhtar Mahi-u-din and Amin Kamil also wrote short stories with political overtones. Amin Kamil wrote an allegorical short story *Sawaal chu Kaluk* (The Head is More Significant) wherein Pakistan and India and their claim on Kashmir has been symbolized by two police officers of two police stations and the State of Kashmir has been represented by a dead body. Akhter Mahi-u-din wrote quiet a good number of short stories during the period between 1990-98.

In one of his short stories Akhter lampoons at the political chaos and confusion. Here is the translation of an excerpt of a short story:

> He replied, "Now he feels better since when he was taken to a doctor, things have been better." What did the doctor do?" I asked. He said," When he reaches his home he should be frisked before entering his house. Then it should be carefully watched whether he enters or not. We followed the advice, and now he enters the door.

The short story depicts the predicament of those people who stayed in Kashmir during the past seventeen years when Kashmiri Pandits had migrated to other parts of the country. The literature written by Kashmiri Pandits after 1990 also manifests their plight in the deserts of exile where the unbearable heat of the sun scorches their skin and soul. The poems written by Arjun Dev Majboor, Tej Rawal, Bimla Raina and Sunita Raina are nostalgic for Kashmir their motherland, its landscape and rich cultural traditions. Their poetry is not a mere cry but a felt thought. At the same time a question arises that if conditions are better in Kashmir, would Kashmiri Pandits return to Kashmir? Whether or not, Kashmir will remain a beloved subject of their poetry as it has been during all these years.

You can assassinate the feeling,
True it is; you cannot forget
Your past.
(Sunita Raina)

The scorched body is in search of
Flowing brooks and hillocks
(Taij Rawal)

A bird came
And sang a sweet song
That blew like a soothing breeze
In this scorching sun
And my soul breathed a sigh of relief
(Arjun Dev Majboor)

TSHYAN (THE RUPTURE) : AN ASSESSMENT

Professor Ratan Lal Shant is one of the most outstanding fiction writers of Kashmiri besides being a celebrated poet of Hindi. He is also one of the prominent translators who has rendered some masterpieces of world literature into Kashmiri. Author of ten and eight books in Kashmiri and Hindi respectively, Professor Shant has emerged not only as a creative writer but as a recognized critic of Kashmiri literature, in general, and Kashmiri short fiction, in particular. His erudite personality, formidable scholarship endowed with lively creative and critical acumen have helped him develop a dispassionate outlook evident in his creative as well as critical works, manifesting his in-depth study of the classical as well as modern literary works of Sanskrit, English, Hindi, Urdu and of course of Kashmiri. For many a critic he is more significant as a fictional critic in Kashmiri rather than a short story writer. But an objective study of his creative and critical works out-rightly nullifies this platitudinous statement as the insights of his creative personality look deep into the human psyche and show his fictional craftsmanship with all its profundity. He has his own way of story telling which is compact and comprehensive so far as his style is concerned and therefore deserves all possible appreciation.

Professor Shant has four short story collections– *Acshar walan Peth Koh* (The Mountain on the Eyelashes), *Trikunjal* (The Triangle) , *Raimit Manay* (The Lost Meanings) and *Tshyan* (The Rupture) under review, and two critical discourses– *Afsane Keh Gov* (The Aspects of Short Stoty) and *Kashur Afsane Az Te Pagah* (The Kashmiri Short Story: Today and Tomorrow) to his credit. His short stories as well as his critical works are a demonstration of his creative fictional skills and his knowledge of the long ranging technical and stylistic changes which took place in the fiction under the impact of the philosophical and psychological discourses by great philosophers and psychologists of modern times. His earlier short stories like *Gudniuk Sabaq* (The First Lesson), *Kraishun* (The Craving) *Curfew* and *Trikunjal* (The Triangle) dealing with the most delicate psychic aspects of human life and its contradictions and complexities which shape the essential human personality and thrill the reader with their radical insights. These stories are closely related to the complex nature and demands of contemporary life. Shant, as a creative writer, believes that literature without any cultural commitment and artistic responsibility is nothing but playing with words and indulging in irresponsible creative activities which have nothing to do with life and its variegated dimensions.

The Rupture is his latest anthology of short stories consisting of twelve stories which deal with one very large subject and theme pattern : life of the Kashmiris in exile, their emotional predicament, their love toward their motherland and their cultural roots. The author is perhaps the first critic of his short stories who has looked at his writings from a possible dispassionate angle in the postscript of the anthology. Most of the stories in the anthology have been written during the last sixteen years of uncertainty, turbulence and turmoil resulting in migration of a large population of Kashmir from the valley to the hot plains of India, especially to the city of temples "Jammu" where they confront the harsh and crude realities of life.

True it is that the author has offered an agreed approach with regard to the issues and technicalities of the stories: plot construction, characterization, dialogues and diction of the narrator that lend them an objective treatment. The author has successfully escaped from the sentimentality, subjectivity and superficial emotion--- as has appeared in the writings of some other writers---which have helped him achieve a balanced, passionate and lucid style deserving much more critical understanding and appreciation. In most of the stories in the book, the irritating agony of characters, their behavioural frustration and a passionate indifference towards the sub-characters and apparently the ordinary issues of day-to-day life have been expressed as universal human emotions, and as such , have achieved the status of masterpieces of fiction in modern Kashmiri literature. The stories depict the atmosphere and the surroundings wherein the main characters act, react with no earth under their feet, the scorching sun that shrivels and withers the roses of life and the delimma, chaos and confusion. The characters of these stories look very probable and familiar and their reader easily appreciates their perceptions and perspectives. The main events occurring in these stories manifest the physical and psychological state of mind of the characters which according to the author is "Reactions sometimes more stylized writing stylized and psyche stylized." (p.205)

A serious and an objective study of the book makes the reader believe that the author has looked dispassionately at the developments which took place during all these tumultuous years and proved as a rupture, creating a huge void and gulf separating the organic components of our cultural personality, rich cultural heritage, our creative symbolism, thought patterns, humanistic outlook and, above all, the intense feeling of human fraternity. The protagonist of *The Rupture* story, Roshanlal symbolizes the sense of cultural alienation of Kashmiris who had to leave their motherland and get themselves accommodated rather maladjusted in an alien cultural atmosphere where everything around is unfavourable, harmful and painful. The characters of almost all the stories emphasize that it is not religion alone that connects man with some cultural monad, but it is the racial and linguistic heritage which gives him a cultural identity and makes him an integral part of that unique cultural entity symbolizing his past and present and envisaging his future.

Shant is a committed writer who has a firm belief that art and literature play prominent role in enriching life and help man understand it better. It is because of this very creative outlook that his characters represent the psychic delimma of those Kashmiris who face the anguish of their inner selves and the melancholy of their restless souls in the far off crowds of alienation. The only thing that helps these characters in developing close relationships is their mother tongue Kashmiri; now the only reminiscent of their cultural legacy. The agony of these characters has been perceived, conceived and experienced on human plane and the reader does not face many difficulties in identifying himself with their psychological outrage and wrathfulness.

The chief protagonist of most of the stories is a Kashmiri migrant representing the state of affairs of the migrants and the difficulties they are facing. He alludes to their emotional mental and psychological problems and complexities, their hopes and their hopelessness. At the same time, the author has also admitted that this chief protagonist cannot be understood unless studied in the proper and overall Kashmiri perspective. The stories are an artistic manifestation of the nostalgia of the characters with regard to their motherland, its scenic beauty, and cultural customs and rituals and their apprehensions about an uncertain future.

> He asked me to get some ice for soothing his feet. In the morning four kg's of ice were brought by Pintoo which melted away and therefore has been drunk. After having said this he gazed at the dry stream behind the tents which was full with boulders" (pp.30-31)

In the book there is a story entitled *Paeri lok and Parilok* (Home is where the heart is) which is technically a long yarn expressing the same cultural alienation found in the other stories but with a distinct difference. This story describes the psychological defence mechanism of the migrants whose strong longing for Kashmir haunts them and, in a state of hallucination, by naming Mohalas and colonies which actually are situated in the valley, they strive to keep the flame of love for their motherland glowing.

The stories involve their reader by their fascinating and powerful narration and the analytical way of looking at issues dealing with the innermost feelings of a man living in undesired and unwanted cultural conditions. The book will go a long way and help the students of Kashmiri literature and Kashmir history to have a better understanding of the times in which it was written and the painful experiences of characters which they went through.

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POST-MODERNISM AND KASHMIRI POETRY

Post-modernism is one of the most problematic literary terms of contemporary literary theory and has been much debated upon. The post-modern critics have not reached any considerable consensus on its connotative dimensions. But one thing is certain about the term that it has no cultural boundaries and has rather a global perspective referring to the art, artist and an artistic sensibility which belong to the postmodern period. It is not only known as a literary term but also is frequently referred to in other social-sciences. Social-scientists use this term for analyzing the socio-political complexities of modern/post-modern societies. For some literary critics the term means avant-gardism while for other critics it remains the same literary trend as was predominantly prevalent in the past century known as modernism.

During the last two decades of the 20th century, the term attracted much attention in literary circles. The term refers to culture essentially western in nature and having its impact across the globe. In this cultural scenario the capitalistic and commercial values manifest themselves with all their potentialities and implications. Chris Baldick deliberating upon the term comments:

> "...characterized by a super abundance of disconnected images and styles- most noticeably in television advertising commercial design and pop video. In this sense promoted by Jean Baudrillard and other commentators, post-modernity is said to be a culture of fragmentary sensations, eclectic nostalgia, disposable simulacra and promiscuous superficiality" [1]

Looking at the term with a dispassionate mind, its main aim and objective seem to attack traditional value structures, standards of life, approaches, ideologies and predilections in all the spheres of life including the fields of art and literature. In the last decade of the 20th century post-modernism as a literary term was applied to those literary works as were known modernistic works of art for a certain period of time. Jermy Hawthron analyses this critical situation and writes:

> Thus works such as Virginia Woolfe's *The Waves* and James Joyces *Finnegan's Wake* have been confidently described modernist for some years but during the last decade or so the term post-modernist has begun to be applied to them by some critics.[2]

Post-modernist art represents a huge amount of literary mass in English and other developed languages as is void of the traditional thought-pattern, diction and style and in which all the literary conventions and canons of the past are thrown to the winds. A post-modernist poet lives in a world ruled by absurdity, meaninglessness, confusion, indifference, commercialism and artificiality. Even if these contemporary realities are organic reality of modern poetry too, the modernist poet strives for a meaning in life in a world which is fragmented and where incoherence and distortion has penetrated deep into the psyche of the artist. The post-modern poet is conscious of the fact that wresting a meaning on life swamped in the absurdity is nothing but an idiot's dream.

The post-modernist outlook therefore displays certain moods and attitudes that are combined products of the socio-political and cultural condition prevalent in the most advanced societies in Europe and America and to a certain extent across the globe.

The traditional and conventional literature of the 19th century is known for its love-narratives and lyrics and their imaginative worlds and the reader would identify himself with the situations emerging in those pieces of art. The modern as well as the post-modern literature reject this kind of literary stuff and standard and rather represent an outlook which is commonly known as self-reflexive. Readings of the poems like *The Wasteland* of T.S.Eliot, *The Cantos* of Ezra Pound and the fictional works of absurdists like Franz Kafka and Albert Camus make their reader conscious that they are reading poetry and fiction in which they cannot identify themselves with the characters as they would do with the Sophoclean and Shakespearian tragic heroes and characters of the 19th century Romantic poetry.

The poetry of Mehjoor and Azad is essentially conventional though they managed to give Kashmiri poetry a new imagination and a fresh vision. They wrote in conventional forms and genres leaving behind their stylistic imprints, but being conventional in a certain sense, life for them was full of meaning and worth living. The same rod can be applied to the Progressive poetry which looked at life from a certain positive point of view as did Christopher Caudwel in his famous critical treatise *Illusion and Reality* and ignored some of its significant aspects.

With the advent of modernism in Kashmiri poetry the most prominent poets of the times rejected the conventional way of expression and took to such artistic experiences as proved innovative and *avant-garde* in cultivating new attitudes and moods representing their vision, modern in nature and having a strong relation with the traditional creative skills and craftsmanship. They wrote poems and *ghazals* that are modern so far as their sensibility and expression is concerned., but continued their age-old relationship with the conventional prosody. At the same time they gave expression to modern sensibility in the ghazal; a form reminiscent of feudalistic thinking. There is no denying the fact that poets like Firaq, Kamil, Nadim, Rahi wrote some profound short poems wherein the elements of existentialism and modern attitudes of life were dealt with quite artistically. It was due to the literary erudition of these poets that they came in touch with such modern literary masterpieces as are generally known for their pessimism and their strong sense of alienation. Instead of love-related themes and romantic leanings, their poetic vision imbibed influence from New-criticism, Freudian psychology and the archetypes of collective unconscious of Jung and wrote poems which envisaged a somewhat liberal outlook in depicting animal desires and passions. Though the number of such poems is very small, their historical significance cannot be ignored. Poems like *Kathi Durwaza to Home* by Nadim and *The Creation* by Rahi, *The Bright Highway* by Kamil *The Whirlpool* by Firaq are among such poems typically modern in style embellished with fresh poetic devices. These poems emphatically depict animal and sensual passions dramatized with a modernist point of view and projected with masterly craftsmanship. These poems are innovative and do exhibit the contradictions of the contemporary society and attempt to change the age-old mindset which comes under attack in these poems.

During the past 20 years a debate has been going on the poetic diction and critical terminology of Kashmiri poetry and Kashmiri Criticism and a consensus has been achieved among the most outstanding poets and critics that emphasizes the manifestation of post-modern condition and its inevitable self-reflexive and innovative style. A new model of writing has come into being due to the recent social changes that emerged in Western and American societies and infiltrated into oriental societies as well and found expression in the literary works. It is also a fact that the socio-economic situation has changed across the globe and societies in various continents have undergone a change which has shattered their socio-cultural structures. The societies changed socially and economically, but things pertaining to the art and artists could not essentially change. Today's artist still feels alienated in the modernist societies as did the romantics in their times. The post-modernist artist feels more pangs of alienation in the contemporary consumer society because of the confrontation of his aesthetic concerns with the vitiated political and cultural fragmentation of modern corrupt society as has been a popular subject of the post-modern poet.

From the post-modernist point of view only a few poets like Rehman Rahi, Shafi Shauq and Gulshan Majeed can lend themselves as artists to this kind of scrutiny. They feel confronted with the post-modern condition which is fundamentally absurd in nature. These poets therefore accepted the challenge thrown upto them by this nihilistic movement and adopted an ironic approach to life. The contents of their poems expresses the complexities of an individual living in the most volatile cultural situation where everything with regard to literature and its conventions has undergone an overwhelming change and the social significance of art has been reduced to the production of potboilers. One can hardly spot any metaphoric and myth-making system in the post-modern poems of Rahi, Gulshan and Shauq who analyse their social complexities in an avant-garde idiom.

Here did I watch
The union of Shiv and Shakti
And you close the door
And watch out blue films.

Look at this assembly ground
The whole of the hamlet
Has turned out.

Raise some slogans
And don't recite absurd verses
You are confined to Kashmir
Talking America
Wearing a Phern
Don't pose to be a modern
(Our Hamlet)

Both of us are OK.
And having independent jobs
Our hospital is fascinating
And in my cardiology unit
Patients suffering several diseases.

You should go to the bank
And withdraw the third installment;
Don't feel worried.

The Steward of Ganaie clan
Met me:
I had come running sir,
Door was locked from outside
And inside, the dogs furious barking.
(Looks Like A Poem)

These excerpts of the poems of Rahi have a social reference as well as an expression manifesting an intellectual acrimony. It also reflects on the cultural bankruptcy of modern man and his materialistic concerns. At the same time they allude to the most sensitive soul encompassed by the most difficult and unfavourable moments of life, surrounded by apprehension manifesting a change called "*Techno-archadian belief*" [3] by the celebrated post-modern critic Ihab Hassan. These excerpts are also an attack on the essential emotive nature which art has been known for centuries together and make their reader land in a wasteland where one does not come across anybody with whom one could share the meaninglessness of life. According to David Harvey "Post-modernism is mimetic of social economic and political practices in the societies in which it appears." [4] From this stand-point, both the poems quoted above are post-modernistic as they deal with the socio-political and economic moorings of the post-modern age from which the poet does not yearn to escape and rather feels the pangs of fragmentation of human personality and perception sharing the philosophical belief that the world may be single but is knowable only in small pieces. This attitude of fragmented personality finds expression in broken images and urban imagery which intensify the feeling of the poet and the impact thereof on the life he is compelled to live.

The poems of Gulshan Majeed, predominantly written in a parodic style and surging in a philosophical pattern, are galleries of broken images and urban imagery and are marked by unconventional poetic structure. They symbolize the fragmentation of the traditional- romantic world causing a strong and strange sense of alienation, and attack the social conventions and customs which held the poet in their "chains" for a certain period of time. These poems are representative of post-modernism in Kashmiri and the poet has rightly come to terms with the existing socio-political and literary condition which has helped him articulate the post-modern poetic idiom—satirical in nature, acknowledging its inevitable intertextuality. The poem entitled "The Story of Qazi Burhan-u-din Kirmani" is one such poem setting up a parodic dialogue between his sensitive soul and absurd identity. His poems are discourses which articulate the presentness of the present and pastness of the past. Their poetic idiom, parodic in tone, paves the way for making a link between the post-modern Kashmiri poetry and the traditional concepts of oriental expression.

Linda Hutcheon describing the post-modern condition and idiom writes:

> It is significant that post-modernist architects do not often use the term parody to describe their ironically re-contextualized echoing of the forms of the past. I think this is because of the negative connotations of the trivialization caused by the retention of an historically limited definition of parody as a ridiculing imitation." [5]

The parodic expression in contemporary post-modern condition has become one of the most significant and inevitable features of post-modern self-reflexive discourse and Gulshan Majeed seems to be well acquainted with these developments. *Qazi Burhan-u-din Kirmani Sanz Surguzashte* (The story of Qazi Burhan-u-din Kirmani), *Samai* (Time), *Maani Wajoodetch Zamin tshai* (The shadow Surety of My Being) and other poems are such artifacts as manifest a contradictory and paradoxical parodic idiom which might look trvial word-play to the traditional reader, but possess profoundity of thought and post-modern expression from a modern readers point of view.

Qazi Burhan-u-din Kirmani
Alias Javidani
Opened his discerning eyes
With the light of intoxicating waters
And through the crevice
Of a piece of dead wood
Saw
The whole universe tied in
His filthy Potshe
(The Story of Qazi Burhan-u-din Kirmani)

On Saeed Shahebs annual fete'
a coquettish
wearing elder sisters gold laced *pherun,*
in plastic shoes.
Masticating fried peas,
Flowing with the crowd
Through the eyes of Amir Khan and Johi Chawla
In search of the characters of the story
(Time)

And you?
Indebted to my witness
On a dark sea-beach
(a single word on a boulder of imagination turned grey by glib utterances an underwear.... Or a turban....Washed time and again hanging
in the string
stretched between two corners of a roof.)
(The Shadow Surety of My Being)

Shame Batsh went upstairs
swabbing the hearth
and picked up the wet panty from the rope
stretched her body
even arms elbows seemed her legs.
(A Day: Rotten Pear)

The Americans are
a strange race of apes
though the foot unwittingly fell down on the tail
and why are they so wrathful
(A Poem)

It is a strange situation
Neither milk nor does the sugar
Suit me.
(A Poem)

Shafi Shauq is another post-modern poet whose poems are a remarkable contribution to modern Kashmiri poetry. His avant-garde and innovative creative approach has given a new direction to Kashmiri short poem. He has imbibed inspiration from the intellectual forces that have been operating for the last eighty years in the field of philosophy, psychology and other disciplines of knowledge. His poetic genius seems to have been influenced by the structuralists who believe that language is a manifestation of relations between the word and concept. For Shauq, language is not in a position to articulate the meaning of the world he is living in, it rather is a signifying relation between the words and things. His poems therefore fall in the category of those poems about which Ezra Pound once said "a dance of the intelligence among words and ideas and modification of ideas and characters" [6]. Shauq's post-modern poems are written in an unconventional form and pattern and spring from ordinary day-to-day experience. Apparently, very ordinary issues of life fascinate Shauq's poetic vision and imagination, but the structure and the style of poems make these trivial and ordinary issues extra-ordinary experiences presented in such linguistic structures as manifesting a conscious departure from the traditional literary style and models. In terms of language and expression, Shauq in comparison to Gulshan Majeed, seems to be more cautious. While Gulshan Majeed deliberately demolishes the conventional metaphoric system and thematic conventions and envisages a language expressing all the resilience of post-modern life, Shauq consciously shows some sort of shyness and respect toward his social value-system. But, so far as his thought- content and structural patterns are concerned, they are organically post-modern. Most of his post-modern poems have socio-political overtones, too.

Poetry

A boundary-line
where
animals and monsters
of both the jungles,
occasionally gather;
howling towards one another,
never touch
each others mouth,
nor go for intercourse,
they only howl,
and fade away
into their respective jungles.
And the line of boundary
Is left desolate and sad.
(The Poetry)

Even after muffling
The bald pate with the muffler
The cold wave penetrates.
A kitten coming out of hallow tree trunk
A piece of paper dancing along the whirl wind, and
Descending from the mountain peaks
The line of ice-gathering mass in
The dark cave and getting the shape…. And
(The Evening, the Solitary Girl and the Embankment)

I came across him yesterday in the chowk.
when the dusky smog was thick.
The man whose sight
arouses a venomous tide in my eyes,
who prides himself
in seeing me in distress.
The man whom I wish
abyss at every step.
(I met him Yesterday)

To sum up the discussion, one must admit that Kashmiri litterateurs justly feel proud of these post-modernist poems which have broadened the stylistic and thematic dimensions of our modern poetry and which can pave way for a larger and long-ranging creative adventure for the younger generation of poets whose poetic genius and creative powers are freezing in the clutches of age-old and cliché-ridden style.

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BHAND NATIYAM: AN OVERVIEW

Moti Lal Kemmu is one of the most distinguished literary figures of modern Kashmir who has contributed to Kashmiri studies in general and Kashmiri drama and dramaturgy in particular. He has written plays and presented them on stage under his own direction and has entertained Kashmiris through the display of his dramatic skills as well as his themes. He has a thorough study of oriental as well as occidental poetics which in turn has helped Kemmu to have a better understanding of both the realms of artistic values and conventions. Kemmu is not only a profound scholar of serious literature and theatre but is at the same time a genuine researcher and a folklorist who has understood and appreciated folk literature particularly the folk theatre of Kashmir in its right perspective, imbibed influences from the same and employed them as potential creative devices in his imaginative writings. His plays reveal that he has borrowed many things from folk theatre which have helped his creative faculty to achieve popularity as well as quality of expression.

The book *BHAND NATIYAM* is a considerable, rather remarkable, contribution to the poetics of *bhand* theatre of Kashmir which has been reflecting on the socio-political and economic conditions of Kashmiris from ancient to modern times. By providing them with a creative outlet and a feast of entertainment, it has helped them forget the difficult and unbearable conditions which they have been confronting over the past several hundred years. The book comprises seven chapters presenting an in-depth study of the subject and the point of view of the author regarding the subject grounded in erudition and knowledge of past and present works of aesthetics and poetics.

In the first chapter, entitled “The Ttraditional Theater in Kashmir”, the author has worked very hard and has brought to light some untouched and virgin aspects of Kashmiri language which have a long ranging relation with the drama that existed in our glorious past in Kashmir. By explaining and interpreting some compound words, idioms and phrases such as *RANGE VEH, RANGE RIVUN, RANGE DIYAY, RANGE MAAM, RANGE DANGE, RANGE KHARUN, RANGAS BERANGI GASTEN, RANGAS MANZ MANDCHHAVUN, RANGE RAAVUN, RANGE RAAVUL, RANGE WAAVEJ, RANGE REETH,* the author has been able to establish that drama has been one of the most prominent creative expressions of Kashmiris in the past as the above mentioned words, idioms and phrases stand witness to this fact. '*Rang*' in Kashmiri and Sanskrit means 'theatre' and the above mentioned expressions authenticate the writer's point of view that Kashmir had a great legacy of theatre in the past and it flourished and developed like anything in the valley. Due to unconducive circumstances this system of creative expression had to face difficulties and was ultimately brought to a miserable naught. Further in this chapter the author quotes from *Natyashastra* of Bharat Muni, *Vishnu- Dharmottara Puran* and from the works of distinguished aestheticians of Kashmir like Bhama, Abhinova Gupta, Ananda Vardhana and Mammatta who worked wonders while dealing with Indian poetics and aesthetics. The author has also taken help from the *Rajtarangini* of Kalhana and the famous *Neelmat Purana* wherein we come across references of theatrical performances and theatrical personalities of bygone days in Kashmir. In addition to establishing the fact that theatre was a prominent tool of creative expression in ancient Kashmir, the author has painstakingly explored and exploited the manuscripts of the past and is therefore in a position to substantiate that different varieties of drama writing were in vogue in Kashmir; some of them are still being performed in different areas of India. *Rupik, Lalit Rattan Mala, Chitra Bharat, Kanak Janki* are some of them which deserve a mention. The author also establishes that plots and stories of the plays used to be mainly based on *Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas* and folk stories like those in *Bhrhata Katha* of Ganadhya. These plays were performed and staged in temples on festive occasions and bear a close resemblance to early Greek drama.

In the next chapter, the main focus has been on the *Bhande Pather* and its salient features and characteristics. In the beginning a thorough discussion has been held on the word *Bhand* itself and its different connotations have been brought to light. Moti Lal Kemmu is the only Kashmiri playwright and drama critic who has carried out tremendous research in the field of Bhande Pather. He quotes from the *Abhinavabharati* and says that *Bhandika* type of plays were performed wherein actors (*Bhands*) would imitate kings and princes in a humorous manner. The weaknesses of kings and their princes would become the target. According to Bharata Muni, the *Bhandika* was essentially a dance which Abhinav Gupta called *Bhanda Nritya* (*Bhand* dance). The Bhand's main aim and objective was to make the audience laugh and to perform their buffoonery. The term *Pather* is more common than *NATUK* and *NATYA*. As has been already said, the main function of *Pather* or *Natya* used to be to relieve spectators of their tension and to entertain them and in doing so many artistic things would come closer to each other in the *Pather*, which later on became the essential characteristics of *Natya* or *Pather*. Dance, acting, lyrics, music were considered essential components of Pather.

Contemporary incidents and events, folktales and stories based on reality were dramatized in these plays. The author refers to various Bhand groups of Kashmir which contributed to this particular theatrical genre who have been living in different corners of the valley. The costumes used by the actors in these plays have also been dealt with. *PAISHWAZ, CHOGA, ANGREKH, SAAFA, PHERAN, SHALWAR, WUDEN, TOPI ,KHORBANE , KRUH, RESH* and *MAS,. BANDI, GOND* and different musical instruments and notes thereof have also been taken care of properly.

In the third chapter, "Maagun" the main character of *Bhande Pather* who is closer to the English 'impresario', has been studied and evaluated in detail. He is said to be the main source and inspiration for actors, musicians and buffoons performing in the *Bhande Pather*. He has a sharp memory and cannot easily forget things. He is supposed to be well-versed in Kashmiri music and knows when and where should a particular note of music be played. While performing in the *Pather* the *Maagun* (impresario) recites Persian verses. As singers sing Persian songs and *sufiana* poetry, *Maagun* makes the audience understand the meaning of these songs. Just as chorus in Greek drama mediates between the audience and actors, in the same way *Maagun* brings the audience and the actors close to each other. The word *Maagun* has been derived from the Sanskrit word *Mahaguni* meaning a person having a lot of qualities. Some scholars like Moti Lal Kemmu suggest that this word could have been derived from the Sanskrit word *Maargana* meaning a person who leads you to a path and one who directs. *Maagun* enters the stage along with three women. After making two or three rounds on the stage they come close to the audience, salute them and then dance in a circle. After this, buffoons enter and then the drama takes off.

In the fourth chapter the *Maskhara* (the buffoon) and his importance has been described. He is said to be the only character in the *Pather* who makes people laugh and whom people love and respect. In yesteryears, it was a practice in Kashmir that acting was taught to actors, especially the skills of buffoonery. The buffoon was supposed to play the drums, *shehnai* and sing songs on *sufiana* notes. In *Batapather* (Hindu *pather*) he was known as *Daga*. In *Derzapaether* at least three buffoons perform while more buffoons perform in *Batapather*. The dialogues of the buffoon are farcical. The songs usually sung by a buffoon in the *Pather* are parodies. He always plays with words and by playing with words he makes his audience laugh and therefore achieves a particular identity which he is known for. The author has very aptly described the costumes used by the buffoons in the *Pather* and has referred to *Vidushak* of Sanskrit drama.

The next chapter deals with *Gupali*. In the traditional *Pathers, 'Gosani Pather'* is a drama where the only female *Bhand* (character) performs and she is known as *Gupali*. *Gupali* means shepherd's daughter. Even Krishanji Maharaj was also known as *Gopal* as he used to play in his childhood days with shepherd boys and girls.

" *Bhanda paether* in Kashmiri literature" is one of the most significant chapters of the book as it presents an analytical survey of the emergence of *Bhande* theatre in Kashmiri language and its social and historical importance has been critically evaluated. The author has strengthened his argument by quoting Kashmiri poets who have used words like '*Natya*' or '*Pather*' in their poetry. Many *vakhs* of Lal Ded, *shruks* of Skeikh al-Alam and lyrics of Rupa Bhawani, Mahmud Gami, Rasool Mir, Shah Qalandar and Krishanjoo Razdan have helped Moti Lal Kemmu to project his thesis.

The last chapter of the book has been dedicated to Dance in Kashmir. Like other arts the art of dance has entertained Kashmiris, and history is witness to it that Kashmir has produced a galaxy of dancers who worked wonders in the field of dance. The *Rajtarangini* of Kalhana, *Neelmat Purana*, Shrivar's additions to *Rajtarangini* all support the argument that Kashmir was a fertile land for the art of dance. Due to the cultural changes the art of dance took different shapes as *Hafiz Nagma, Baccha Nagma, Tamboori Nagma, Damali* etc.

I feel that the book will go a long way in helping Kashmiri readers to have a better understanding of the poetics of Kashmiri *Bhand* theatre that has helped them for years to conduct themselves properly in the most difficult circumstances they had to face at various junctures of history.

Readings comprise some vivacious and succinct discourses, refurbished with appropriate argument and idiom. Dr. Majrooh Rashid has a view point and a corresponding line of approach not governed by forces and interests extraneous to literature which leave his readers free to form their own judgement.

—Prof. Gulshan Majeed

Writing about native literature, that too in a non-native language is an arduous and challenging task. I am happy that Dr. Majrooh, a reputed poet and scholar, has accepted this challenge and accomplished it ably. His critical essays read out in various seminars and published in prestigious journals have won him wide acclaim and his opinion about constantly changing issues about literature is accepted as authentic and thought-provoking by readers as well as writers. His success lies in disturbing commonly accepted notions about writers and writings and in entailing revision.

Readings is sure to create a constructive discussion about the past and contemporary literature.

Prof. Shafi Shauq

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Majrooh Rashid (1958-) did his M.A. M.Phil and Ph. D from the Department of Kashmiri, University of Kashmir where he has been teaching for the last 17 years. He is a poet, critic and short story writer. Some of his books are: *Asri Kaeshir Shaeiri,* (Contemporary Kashmiri Poetry), *Lasa Khan Fida* and *Asad Mir*